
**PACIFIC
POWDERKEG**
**AMERICAN
NUCLEAR
DILEMMAS IN
KOREA**

The bottom half of the cover features stylized, overlapping illustrations of birds and jets. The birds are depicted in a light blue color, while the jets are in a darker blue. They are arranged in a way that suggests movement and flight, with some birds appearing to be in the foreground and others in the background. The jets are also stylized, with prominent wings and tail sections.

PETER HAYES

Pacific Powderkeg

*American Nuclear Dilemmas
in Korea*

by
Peter Hayes
Nautilus Pacific Research



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Preface and Acknowledgments

The second cold war may have ended in Europe, but the third cold war has already begun in Korea.* Indeed, the first cold war never ended in Korea. The Berlin Wall may have fallen in Germany, but millions of Koreans still cannot surge across the demilitarized zone to reunite divided families and nation.

Ironically, the lethal status quo that grips Korea today arises more from domestic factors than geopolitical pressures. Indeed, the European example is a far greater threat to the leadership of both Koreas than the military menace each poses to the other.

In the north, the Stalinists preserve their rule by emphasizing military insecurity on the one hand, and by keeping North Koreans extraordinarily isolated from and ignorant of the rest of the world on the other. Nor have the Soviets reduced their military support for Kim Il Sung's regime, unlike their dissociation from the hard-line East European satellites.¹ Soviet policy toward North Korea is the glaring exception to the rule of *glasnost*.

For its part, Roh Tae Woo's regime in the south has arrested nearly four political prisoners each day between its inauguration in 1987 and August 1989—more than twice the rate of its brutal predecessor.² Thus, South Korea's leaders explicitly reject the idea that the Korean Wall might crumble before popular pressure like that in Berlin.³

South Korea is also flexing military muscle at a regional level. In 1989 it participated in the U.S. military exercise Pacex and announced that it will join the U.S. naval exercise Rimpac in 1990. Moreover, Seoul is no

*Neither north nor south Korea is recognized as a legitimate state by the United Nations. However, as common American usage is to capitalize North and South Korea as if they are separate nations (as distinct from states), this book follows American usage throughout. This usage should not be interpreted as concurrence with the notion that the Korean nation has been successfully and permanently divided. Indeed, many readers may be interested to know that the United Nations Command (run by the United States) and the United Nations itself, and often official agencies of both Koreas refer to the two states as north and south Korea.

longer willing to play second fiddle to other big powers in the military game. From mercenary status in the Vietnam War in the 1960s, South Korea graduated first to the ranks of major arms exporters in the 1970s. Then it joined the elite club of military aid donors in the 1980s. In 1988, for example, Seoul did not hesitate to ship arms to Manila after Philippine defense minister Fidel Ramos's secret visit.

The standoff in Korea may not last forever. The faultline that divides Korea could slip without warning. Whatever finally sparks rapid change—the death of Kim Il Sung in the north, or the election of a democratic president in the south being two prime candidates—a rising tide of nationalist sentiment will eventually overwhelm all the obstacles to the reunification of Korea.

In the long run, only two questions are pertinent. First, when will this transition occur and how peaceful—or violent—will it be? And second, will the restored Korean nation adopt a neutral or an aligned foreign policy? The answers to these questions have momentous implications.

Should Korea be reunified by peaceful negotiation between the two Koreas and slowly become a neutralist state in northeast Asia, then the United States could gradually reduce U.S. ground, naval, and aerial forces stationed in the West Pacific and committed to military contingencies in Korea. In this case, the United States could dismantle rather than simply relocate U.S. Forces Korea, thereby directly saving about \$2 billion a year and indirectly a further \$6–10 billion.

This scenario would be feasible if the superpowers continue their *détente* in Europe and extend it to East Asia. It would virtually dismantle the U.S. security bloc in East Asia built after the Korean War. It would lay the groundwork for a truly peaceful interstate order in the Pacific region by eliminating a wellspring of superpower rivalry in Korea, long the biggest single obstacle to the construction of a regional community relying on economic and ecological diplomacy rather than military force. It would also enable the superpowers to offer incentives to China and Japan to construct such an order and to defuse nascent military competition in the Sino-Japanese relationship.⁴

An alternative, “peaceful” path would be for a slowly reunified Korea to align closely with the United States. This outcome could be achieved by South Korea's slow, pervasive political-economic penetration of a post-Kim Il Sung North Korea.

In this case, U.S. forces would remain stationed in Korea during the gradual relaxation of north-south tensions. Some of the U.S. ground forces in Korea might be relocated to Japan or to Hawaii in the mid-1990s, but the bulk would stay put.

The United States would thereby retain its political-military hegemony

over Korea and Japan by extending to its allies its strategic nuclear deterrence against China and the Soviet Union. To contain Korea's nuclear aspirations, the United States might share its nuclear forces with its Korean ally, and would attempt to do the same with Japan. This "peaceful" path would lead to the reconstitution of the U.S.-led nuclear bloc in East Asia and the Pacific.

The two violent paths away from the Korean impasse also lead in very different directions. Reunification by violence would herald victory for one of the Koreas. The two Koreas could find themselves heading toward war should there be no visible progress toward reunification while pressures build for social and political liberalization in one or both states.

If Pyongyang should win, then reunified Korea would become a neutralist and introverted state that would try to assert its independence from all four great powers in East Asia. This outcome could solidify the U.S.-Japanese alliance but could also undercut U.S. leverage in the global, great-power triangle. If this development were to coincide with severe stress or outright rupture in the U.S.-Japan alliance over trade and/or U.S. intervention in a renewed Korean War, it could impel Japan to increase greatly its military profile in the region. If the timing were to coincide with increased tension between the United States and the Soviet Union at the global level, then renewed war in Korea could trigger the spread of the third cold war to the rest of the world, as occurred with the first in the 1950s.

If Seoul should win a north-south war, then reunified Korea might align itself closely with the United States. But Seoul would also be much more independent from Washington than in the past. To leapfrog Japan in the great-power game, Korea might well deploy an independent nuclear force, pushing Japan either to travel along the same path or to shelter explicitly under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, abandoning the nonnuclear principles.

This fourth outcome would herald greater multipolarity in East Asian international affairs, but also rapid and unpredictable shifts of alignment and relative power in the region. The likely correlate would be increasing rates of military preparedness and the spread of weapons of mass destruction to mid- and small powers within the region.

Unfortunately, the violent path has a third, cataclysmic possible destination where nobody wins. It is this final outcome that is of greatest concern, given Korea's immense explosive potential. For reasons adduced below, this pessimistic possibility is the subject of exhaustive analysis in this book. This topic bears examination not just because there is good reason to be pessimistic that reunification in Korea can be peaceful, but because the third outcome could be catastrophic, for the world as well for Korea.

Korea is the fuse on the nuclear powderkeg in the Pacific. The divided peninsula is one of the few places that could ignite general nuclear war between the nuclear-armed great powers.

This study argues that this dire situation arises from the introduction of American nuclear weapons into the Korean conflict. It is divided into three parts that are split broadly into past, present, and future aspects of this potentially lethal intervention.

Part I traces the evolution of U.S. nuclear doctrine, forces, and strategy in Korea. It shows that the United States never settled on a single nuclear strategy in Korea. The strategy of militant containment based on nuclear threat never completely supplanted the U.S. Army's preference for nuclear warfighting. As the dominant institution implementing U.S. containment policy on the peninsula, it constructed a virtual nuclear domain in Korea. In the 1970s, that domain proved impregnable even to a president who had set himself the task of revising U.S. strategy in Korea.

Part II describes the present organization and composition of U.S. nuclear forces in Korea, as well as the collaborating South Korean forces. It shows how regional dimensions of nuclear strategy in Korea allowed the army to hitch its wagon to the State Department and Congress when its interests in Korea were threatened. It argues that the nuclear threats on North Korea have had unanticipated effects. The United States has thereby stimulated a dangerous arms race in Korea that could escalate into U.S. first use of nuclear weapons and spillover into great-power nuclear war.

This dynamic has presented the United States with a set of intractable and awkward nuclear dilemmas in Korea. Part III delineates the contours of this double-barreled dilemma. One barrel is the possibility of war and escalation to nuclear war. The other is the possibility that one or both Koreas will opt for their own nuclear force. Steps that the United States might take to unload one barrel could cause the other to fire, and vice versa. It is crucial, therefore, that the steps chosen to disarm both barrels do not cause one or both to go off.

Institutional inertia and organizational obstacles block the United States from moving in this direction. Fortunately, there are signs that Koreans themselves may insist that the dilemmas be resolved without war or proliferation. On the other hand, hostility remains high in Korea, and North and South Korean nuclear fuel cycle developments are edging both Koreas toward a near nuclear weapon option.

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In matters of state, it has been said, the truth always has a bodyguard of lies. Nowhere is this more so than in matters of national security and nuclear forces. Before this study was undertaken, the military kept virtually all trustworthy information on U.S. nuclear forces in Korea under wraps. This study relied heavily on the U.S. Freedom of Information Act to extract information that cast new light on matters of great public importance. If nothing else, it demonstrates the importance of protecting and strengthening the Freedom of Information Act.

Acronyms

AB	Air Base
ACC	Air Component Command
ADM	Atomic Demolition Munition
AFAP	Artillery Fired Atomic Projectile
BG	Brigadier General
CANDU	Canadian Deuterium Uranium reactor
CCF	Chinese Communist Forces
CFA	Combined Field Army
CFC	Combined Forces Command
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CINC C2	Commander-in-Chief Command and Control
CINCUNC	Commander-in-Chief UN Command
CINCPAC	U.S. Commander-in-Chief Pacific
CoS	Chief of Staff
COMO	Commanding Officer
CSCT	Combat Support Coordination Team
CUWTF	Combined Unconventional Warfare Task Force
DCoS	Deputy Chief of Staff
DCS	Defense Communications System
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DOD	Department of Defense
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
EAM	Emergency Action Message
EAST	Eighth Army Special Troop Command
ED	Emergency Destruction
EMP	Electromagnetic Pulse
EUSA	Eighth U.S. Army
EV	Emergency Evacuation
FLOT	Forward Line of Own Troops

FROKA	First ROK Army
FSL	Field Storage Location
GCC	Ground Component Command
GNP	Gross National Product
HL	Historical Lesson
HQ	Headquarters
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
INF	Intermediate Nuclear Forces
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
KATUSA	Korea Augmentation to the United States Army
KAMS	Korean Ammunition Management Systems
kHz	Kiloherz
Kt	Kiloton
KPA	Korean People's Army
LWR	Light Water Reactor
LZ	Landing Zone
MAC	Military Armistice Commission
MG	Major General
MHz	Megahertz
mm	Millimeter
MOX	Mixed Oxide nuclear fuel
Mt	Megaton
MW	Megawatt
MWe	Megawatt–electric
MW(t)	Megawatt–thermal
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBC	Nuclear Biological and Chemical
NCC	Naval Component Command
NCMA	National Command Military Authorities
NFU	No First Use
NFZ	Nuclear-Free Zone
NKA	North Korean Army
NNSC	Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission
NOSOP	Nuclear Operations Standard Operating Procedures
NPG	Nuclear Planning Group (of NATO)
NPT	Nonproliferation Treaty
NSC	National Security Council
NST	Nuclear Support Team (U.S.)
OPLAN	Operations Plan
OSI	Offshore Islands (of China)
PACOM	Pacific Command

PAL	Permissive Action Link
P _k	Probability of Kill
POC	Program of Cooperation
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRM	Presidential Review Memorandum
PRP	Personnel Reliability Program
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
ROKA	ROK Army
ROKG	ROK Government
SAI	Science Applications, Inc.
SOP	Standard Operation Procedures
TOT	Time over Target
TROKA	Third ROK Army
U.K.	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Nations Command
U.S.	United States
USA	U.S. Army
USAF	U.S. Air Forces
USFK	U.S. Forces Korea
USMC	U.S. Marine Corps
USMARFORK	U.S. Marine Forces Korea
WSD-K	Weapons Support Detachment–Korea (of USFK)

Introduction

As War is no act of blind passion, but is dominated by the political object, therefore the value of that object determines the measure of the sacrifices by which it is to be purchased . . . As soon, therefore, as the required outlay becomes so great that the political object is no longer equal in value, the object must be given up, and peace will be the result.

—Carl von Clausewitz *On War*, 1832.¹

Koreans are blessed because their land is spared the earthquakes and volcanoes that afflict other peoples living on the Pacific rim of fire.

They are cursed instead with blights of human rather than geological origin. It is their misfortune to live at the intersection of the strategic force fields of four great powers, three of which are nuclear armed. The baneful result of this historical accident is that the Korean nation is divided against itself. All Koreans are tormented by being unable to communicate with family and friends living across the demilitarized zone. Worse still, many kin and friends have been deeply alienated by the fact that they fought on opposite sides, first in the war against Japan, again in the civil war in Korea from 1945 to 1950, and finally in the Korean War.

Geopolitically, therefore, Koreans are caught between the tectonic plates of great power that grate against each other in Korea. At the end of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union divided Korea at the 38th Parallel. After the Korean War erupted in June 1950, the front line surged up and down the peninsula, and with it millions of refugees. When the armistice was signed in 1953 the great powers drove white posts across the peninsula to mark the military demarcation line. It became one of the two great fractures between the cold war blocs formed by the superpowers. Unlike the stable European central front, which symbolized the fearful rigidity of the cold war, the Korean demilitarized zone was forged in a hot war that spawned the policy of containment. It never cooled enough to solidify into a stable, recognized border between the two Koreas like that between East and West Germany.

Europe and Korea also differ in that the U.S. military presence in Europe has activated intense debate inside the American polity. In part,

Western European leaders provoked this debate. But Americans with strong cultural and historical ties from their immigrant past also responded to Europe's dilemmas, and not always in ways that suited the American national security elite.

In contrast, there is no powerful Asian-American lobby in the United States today to countervail the East Asian policies and actions of the U.S. leadership—especially in relation to the plight of Koreans. Most ordinary Americans prefer to forget the GIs who died in Korea. The foreign policy elite—with significant exceptions—is mostly Eurocentric. And the American strategic community mostly ignores the peninsula.

Popular amnesia, Eurocentrism, and an analytical blind spot have all worked to remove Korea from most Americans' mental map of the world. The same, of course, cannot be said for the vested organizational interests in the U.S. military presence in Korea. Consequently, their routine and crisis operations are largely unrestrained by domestic political forces that might otherwise preclude behavior that could unleash nuclear war. In particular, the U.S. Army's organizational pathologies and operational ideologies are independent factors generating instability and rendering conceivable nuclear war in Korea.

The intellectual failure of nuclear strategists to concern themselves with Korea is especially curious. Despite the fact that one of the United States' only two ground troop trip wires for forward deployed nuclear weapons is found in Korea (the other being Europe), few American strategic intellectuals pay any attention to this situation. Contemporary Korea does not even rate a mention in three recent and otherwise excellent studies of American coercive diplomacy, crisis management, and crisis stability as related to nuclear war.²

Yet Korea was undeniably the epicenter of one geopolitical earthquake of truly momentous and calamitous proportions.³ While the sharp edges of superpower blocs have dulled with time (and even split asunder in the case of the Sino-Soviet alliance), the military blocs still scrape against each other in Korea.

All four great powers in the region rightly regard Korea as of vital import to their own fates. No one can predict when one plate might slip hard against another. It would be foolish, however, to deny the possibility. The great powers themselves, therefore, remain a source of instability and conflict in Korea.

Volcanic Potential

In the last Korean war, however, it was incandescent social and political conflicts in the local society that forced their way to the surface and ignited great power intervention.⁴

Korean society first experienced modernity under the sword of Japanese imperialism. It was momentarily liberated by the outcome of World War II, only to be thrust into civil war by external powers that frustrated the nascent democratic republic. Then it was bifurcated by an international war that reduced its culture to rubble and shredded its social fabric. Finally, it was overturned by a revolution in the north imposed by a Stalinist Communist party that rode a wave of local democratic desire to power, and by reforms in the south directed by authoritarian political and military regimes supported by their patron, the United States.

Both Koreas contained the social tensions created by this rapid upheaval of traditional society by the sheer oppressive weight of state repression, like the basalt plug that caps an inactive but trembling volcano, perched atop molten magma churning in the earth's crust.

From virtual obliteration in 1953, North Korea has reconstructed its society into a self-sufficient, industrial economy that first outperformed the South Korean postwar "basket case" but then fell far behind the south in the economic race after the mid-1970s. Today, North Korea is an autarchic, isolated, regimented society crippled by information controls, a rigid and centralized command bureaucracy, and an obsolete political ideology that saturates the society and estranges North Koreans from almost everyone who visits them.

The south, on the other hand, has grown into a budding economic and military great power in its own right, surpassing lesser trade rivals with its highly geared, export-oriented economy. Today, South Korea is nipping at the heels of its (tor)mentor, Japan. The phenomenal economic growth of South Korea—with a GNP that doubles every decade or less—was driven by state-led corporatism epitomized by the arrest in 1961 of its leading businessmen by incoming military strongman, Park Chung Hee. Ordered to invest or face expropriation, they invested.

The social contents of this pressure cooker have boiled over twice since 1979. But the cast-iron, black pot of the national security system remains intact. Everything has changed in Korea since the 1987 revolt, but nothing has changed. This political paradox makes South Korea's politics volatile and erratic.

In both Koreas, rapid economic development and social change have built up a head of steam. Periodic revolts, successions, and coups in the south have been safety valves that preserved the fundamental structures of the centralized state and capitalist economy—at the cost of enduring illegitimacy for its leadership. More often than not, South Korea's rulers have used the most sophisticated surveillance system in the world (except possibly that in North Korea), combined with the arbitrary arrest and torture of dissenters to contain popular dissatisfaction with their policies.

In the north, Kim Il Sung's propaganda apparatus inculcates the population with a xenophobic, nationalist ideology with strong Confucian

overtones.⁵ At the same time, he avoided the spread of destabilizing expectations by distributing equitably the fruits of growth while excluding most North Koreans from even minimal information about the outside world. Whenever these social and political controls failed, he simply purged or eliminated his opponents. Nonetheless, the North Korean state will face a succession crisis after the death of Great Leader, now in his eighties. Kim will leave an unknown quantity—his son—in his place.

Economic long marches, hothouse growth, and centralized state structures poorly equipped for responding to popular demands or the orderly transfer of power make Korea a prime Asian candidate to become the social and political Krakatoa of the North Pacific.

Undoubtedly Korean nationalism is the most potent force underlying this explosive potential. Both Koreas lay claim to the mantle of Korean nationalism—and to the political and moral right to rule over the whole peninsula. Whether social disorder, political volatility, and Korean nationalism could lead to another north-south war is unknowable. In turn, it cannot be predicted whether such a conflict would precipitate another great-power confrontation. But it happened once already. It would be foolhardy to assert that it cannot happen again.

How is this volcanic potential linked to the other fault lines that rift the international system in the Pacific?

Security Dilemma

Korea's explosive potential is caused by three factors. First, the ongoing conflict between the heavily armed and hostile North and South Korean states keeps alive the prospect of a major conventional war in Korea. Second, external alliances with third parties have made it possible for a north-south war to escalate beyond the peninsula. In particular, American intervention in this conflict has been maintained by militant policy currents in the United States. They have ensured that this intervention includes deployment of nuclear weapons into Korea and the use of coercive nuclear diplomacy against North Korea.

Third, powerful U.S. agencies, most notably the army and the State Department, have developed vested interests in keeping U.S. nuclear forces in Korea. The army, for example, has a degree of operational control over the South Korean military that endows it with a powerful rationale to stay in Korea. These institutions are party to—and often conduct themselves in ways that harden—the north-south standoff in Korea—a conflict that could start nuclear war.

With over a million and a half troops under arms, North and South Korea are venomous antagonists, their enmity expressed over forty years

of relentless propaganda. Steps taken by one Korea to enhance its own security often detract from the security of the other. The external threats faced by both Koreas, but especially North Korea, also heighten the fears felt in both capital cities that the other could pull its hair trigger.

These are the elements of a classic security dilemma, constantly verging toward deadlock and war.⁶ Each Korean state would like to eliminate the other. Each perceives the other to be undertaking an offensive, coercive arms buildup. Memories of the Korean War and continuing hostility virtually foreclose the option of peaceful coexistence, let alone the political, economic, and cultural reintegration of Korean society.

Justifying itself as deterring North Korean aggression, the United States has kept troops in South Korea since the end of the Korean War. It currently deploys about 40,000 troops in South Korea. These forces act as a trip wire, ensuring that Americans would again participate in any renewed Korean conflict. The last Korean War claimed the lives of more than 50,000 Americans, as well as 1.1 million Koreans and 900,000 Chinese.

Another war in Korea would not only devastate Korea. It might be cataclysmic. For it is conceivable that the United States would use the nuclear weapons it keeps in Korea. Since North Korea borders onto and is allied with the Soviet Union and China, escalation to superpower nuclear conflict cannot be precluded.

The most obvious manifestation of the steadily deteriorating situation in Korea is the complete militarization of the demilitarized zone. Since 1953 the arms control measures imposed by the armistice have collapsed completely. The potential for purposeful or inadvertent escalation exists in Korea as in few other places in the world.

Policy Currents

The second factor that makes nuclear war possible in Korea is U.S. policy. Since the end of the Korean War in 1953, U.S. policy has been premised on maintaining the division on the peninsula. Indeed, U.S. military strategy and diplomatic posture have not only maintained but have hardened the standoff. This study uses the concept of *policy current* to analyze the impact of U.S. institutions on the Korean conflict.

In all modern societies, the traditional ethos has been destroyed by the social conflicts unleashed by industrialization or has been rent by the experience of colonialism and neocolonial subordination. In the process, the organization and ideology of the successful revolutionary class becomes the source and substance of political power. As societies modernize, state bureaucracies become a realm of autonomous interests with separate

trajectories and goals from those of financial, commercial, and industrial capital.⁷ The United States is no exception.

In this theory, first articulated by Franz Schurmann, politics within the ruling elite or political class revolves around bureaucratic wars over interest and around the role of the chief executive in balancing warring factions and obtaining popular support for the policy outcomes. The inverse of the theory—that a controversial policy is likely to fail if it lacks a powerful domestic constituency of organizational interests represented in the state—is exemplified in this study by the fate of Carter's Korea policy.

Viewed thus, the state is not a unified instrument of class power, but a contested terrain. In this dialectical conception, policy currents originate in and are articulated by politically allied interests in civil society and the state. This fluid social constituency seeks legitimacy by portraying itself in terms of the national interest.⁸ Thus, policy currents in the U.S. political system are expressed in increasingly abstract ideologies as the options move closer to the authoritative locus of power, the White House.

As their social basis of support is always shifting, policy currents are never static. Their relative strength waxes and wanes in accord with three factors: (1) the coalitions struck by interests; (2) the challenge posed by oppositional forces; and (3), the utility of the contending policy currents to the chief executive in legitimating its policy to different social constituencies.

Policy currents therefore originate in rivulets and streams flowing from the headwaters of specific interests. Each current carries the sediment of interests that may be political, economic, ideological, or military in nature.⁹ Policy currents carry different types and densities of interest, depending on which catchments they tap and where they merge with bigger branches.

Organizational Interests

The major American influences on U.S. policy toward Korea emanate from military, intelligence, and diplomatic agencies. Although intelligence organizations such as the Central Intelligence Agency may have an inside track into presidential policy in particular spheres (such as covert warfare), they cannot compete with the military in the formulation of U.S. policy on military affairs. They are outgunned even on narrow military intelligence issues pertaining to Korea where the Pentagon can mobilize its own service and unified command intelligence outfits.

The traditional fighting services—the army, air force, navy, and marines—are institutions that have tapped deep roots in the domestic political economy of the United States, creating powerful local consti-

cies addicted to pork barrel politics. Neither the State Department nor the intelligence agencies can match the Pentagon's domestic political influence.

The military also offers politicians the option to look tough. In contrast, following State Department advice often makes the president look like a wimp, its brief being to resolve conflict by diplomacy rather than by force of arms. The institutional competitors to the military in foreign policy matters are tiny in comparison with the sheer size of the Pentagon. Nor can they match the Pentagon's truly global communications apparatus.¹⁰

The organizational interests of the military services are visible in two forms in the Pacific. First, the services overtly display their forces, thereby advertizing the presence of naval, air, army, or marine power. Overt displays take many forms such as forward basing of forces, ship or aircraft visits, military displays and interventions, weapons tests, and so on.

Second, the services are represented by regional (such as Pacific Command) and subregional commands (such as U.S. Forces Korea or Japan). The U.S. military call these institutions *unified commands*. In principle, unified commands are multiservice commands intended to transcend the interests of any single service. In practice, each unified command often expresses the predominant interests of one service. Thus, Pacific Command is a largely naval command, while U.S. Forces Korea is predominantly run by the army.

Each service (and each faction within each service) grows as fast as it can by fighting for a larger share of the U.S. military budget. A service's essential missions justify its budgetary allocation. Accordingly, services oppose any trespass by another service onto their institutional turf. Services prey on each other by developing weapon systems that enable them to supplant another service's existing mission, by poaching on the allocation of essential missions between the services, or by pioneering new missions such as space-based weapons.

Thus the navy fights at all costs to keep other services from seeking capabilities or missions related to sea control; the air force resists all efforts to replace piloted aircraft with pilotless missiles; the Army strives to keep as many ground combat missions as possible, and in particular to retain the tank; and the marines maneuver to keep their autonomy from the encroachments of the other three services. These missions constitute the organizational essence of each service.¹¹

Each organizational interest develops its own organizational repertoire of formal standard operating procedures and informal rules of thumb to implement its essential missions. At the same time, organizational rivalry induces rapid technological innovation and deployment of new weapon systems, many of which necessitate adjusting military doctrine. Minor doctrinal changes are reflected in the secret war plans and operating

procedures. The ideological rationale of the forces does not have to be shifted to legitimate incremental changes.

Completely new weapon systems, however, can induce radical changes in force structure and compel technocrats to generate new rationales. By testing first strike weapons (such as the MX missile), promoting doctrines (such as nuclear warfighting), and implementing strategies (such as offensive maritime strategy) that disturb the prevailing alliance ideologies, the services undermine the consensual basis of alliance integration. Service rivalry is therefore an important dynamic that forces alliances to adjust due to institutional disorder within and ideological divergence between U.S. forward deployed forces. As will become evident, the U.S. services in Korea are no exception.

Because of this competitive dynamic, the services became the main progenitors of nuclear ideology, although its articulation remains a largely civilian affair. As noted already, however, the strategists have mostly ignored Korea as an arena of nuclear war, suspending the evolving force structure in a peculiar ideological vacuum.

The inevitable result of these turf jealousies and duplicative capabilities is that the services prefer to run their own show, to avoid joint operations, to keep their freedom of maneuver by not being tied down by commitments to allies, and to retain their own forward bases and supportive military capabilities.¹²

Due to their different missions, the services have differential impacts on the integrative and ideological dimensions of nuclear hegemony. Army forward forces, for example, have long logistic tails reaching back from the front line, such as the demilitarized zone in Korea, to other U.S. allies. Army supply pipelines and reinforcement stockpiles form regional base networks that impose integrative imperatives on host nations. Japan and the Philippines, for example, find their destinies linked intimately to both Koreas by virtue of hosting bases that support U.S. ground forces in South Korea.

By their very nature, army forces also seek a coalitional relationship with host nation ground forces. In contrast, air force and navy bases tend to be self-contained entities, insulated from and uninterested in host nation politics by virtue of their long-range, free-wheeling forces and their regional military interests in confronting the Soviet Union.¹³

Policy currents do not just carry interests from the source to their political destination. For policies that arise from specific interests may create new interests by spawning institutions to implement the policies, often long after the original policies (and even interests) have faded away, or become redundant or obsolete through changes in policy.

The army's stake in the policy of militant containment in Korea and that of the State Department in Japan exemplify such interests at work in

American nuclear strategy in Korea. Such vested interests can throw up troublesome backwash by whipping up public resistance to the adoption or implementation of policies. Their campaign to overturn President Jimmy Carter's policy of troop withdrawal from Korea was a case in point.

Containment

Three major policy currents have been identified in American postwar history with relevance to Korea. Broadly, these are the internationalist, rollback, and containment currents.¹⁴

The internationalist current was exemplified by President Roosevelt's proposals at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences with Stalin to make Korea a trusteeship. The State Department pushed this line until the division of Korea became irrevocable in 1948. The internationalist idea that interstate cooperation could resolve and even supersede conflict in Korea was finally vanquished by the Korean War in 1950.

Rollback was the opposite notion that international conflicts were inevitable and ultimately irresolvable. Rollbackers held that eventually the great powers would have to fight it out in Asia. As the predominant power, it followed for the United States that the sooner this occurred, the better. For General MacArthur, the epitome of rollback, Korea was merely an excuse to fight the real war beyond the Yalu, beckoning the United States to the final showdown with Communist China.

In contrast, the containment current held that tacit adversarial cooperation amidst profound conflict was the only feasible path between these extreme, unrealistic alternatives. Democracy's battle against Communist expansion would be won by drawing boundaries that separated the antagonists. Containment policy thus consisted of "holding the line."

How best to hold the line, however, was controversial. Consequently, containment always consisted of two variations on one theme.¹⁵ George Kennan in the late 1940s at the State Department exemplified the first, the realpolitik containment line of managing competition with the Soviet Union. Kennan wanted to entrap the Soviet Union in a web of international obligations that would vest it with interests in the international status quo, all the while confronting it with superior American power applied at Soviet weak points.

Paul Nitze's NSC-68 in 1950 and Gen. Douglas MacArthur's Asia-first line exemplified the twin sources of the militant containment line that (with the help of the Korean War) swept aside Kennan's current. This policy current combined elements of the unilateralist rollback line with the realpolitik strategy of avoiding war with the Soviet Union.

MacArthur's suggestion to Eisenhower and Dulles in December 1952 that nuclear weapons be used to create a radioactive belt between United Nations and Communist forces in Korea was a literal nuclear rendering of militant containment.¹⁶ Since the end of the Korean War, the Army has ensured that a parallel mix of motives influenced U.S. policy toward the Korean conflict.

But containment did not become a static policy after 1953. Administrations have varied the mix of competing currents in policy. During Nixon's administration, the realpolitik variant of containment was preeminent. Under the slogan of trilateralism, President Carter even managed to reinstall internationalism for a short time. In general, however, the militant containment current has been ascendant in the U.S. foreign policy community since 1951, when President Truman sacked General MacArthur. The Reagan administration was cast in this mold, showing more militancy than realpolitik than any other Administration since the Korean War.

Historical Lessons and Strategic Policies

Originating in different interests, each current selectively interprets the past to produce distinctive guides to the future that may be termed *historical lessons*, a concept used in this study to analyze U.S. nuclear strategy in Korea.¹⁷

Historical lessons do not correspond necessarily with the historical past. Rather, they are the practical and moral homilies that may be grounded as much in mythology as they are in history. As we shall see, the most important historical lessons relating to U.S. nuclear strategy in Korea are those pertaining to the relative utility of different ways of using nuclear weapons to support these competing policy currents. *Strategic policies* consist of goals and practices that are guided by historical lessons. The policies are called *strategic* because the policies pertain to purposive behavior in the military dimension of interstate relations.

The concept of a strategic *goal* is straightforward: it refers to a desired impact on an adversary's behavior that a state sets out to obtain by its military practices. Likewise, a strategic *practice* is simply the set of policy tools (military forces) used and actions (verbal and nonverbal) taken to achieve a goal.

At first, the United States tried to pursue two strategic goals in Korea with nuclear weapons, namely, compellence and deterrence of North Korea. (These concepts are defined below.) In search of these effects, the United States tested two kinds of strategic practice: nuclear warfighting based on the war with Japan, and later, nuclear threats in the war with North Korea and China.

Later, a third strategic goal—the reassurance of allies (and even of adversaries such as the Soviet Union and China, although never North Korea)—and a third practice—nuclear cooperation or arms control (but never in Korea)—were added to the menu of U.S. policy options. In principle, any of the three strategic goals can be achieved by employing any one of the three practices, generating nine possible strategic policies (see table 1).

Table 1
Nuclear Policies, Goals, and Practices

<i>Practices</i>	<i>Strategic Goals</i>		
	C Compellence	D Deterrence	R Reassurance
1. Warfighting	C1 (HL1)	D1	R1
2. Threats	C2 (HL2)	D2 (HL3)	R2 (HL3)
3. Cooperation	C3	D3	R3 (HL4)

Note: HL = historical lesson

HL1: *policy*: C1

historical correlate: Hiroshima/Nagasaki

strategic content: use nuclear weapons to compel enemy to capitulate

HL2: *policy*: C2

historical correlate: Korean War, crisis behaviour

strategic content: use nuclear threats to compel enemy to settle without clearcut defeat

HL3: *Policy*: D2, R2

historical correlate: Cuban missile crisis, Mutual Assured Destruction doctrine

strategic content: use nuclear threats to deter enemy aggression and to reassure allies

HL4: *policy*: R3

historical correlate: SALT, INF nuclear arms control agreements

strategic content: adjust nuclear threats to reassure enemy and/or ally

These policies are not exclusive and may be tried out simultaneously or sequentially and with various combinations of goals and practices. Nuclear threats, for example, can be used to deter and compel one or more adversaries at the same time as allies are reassured by U.S. resolve—an example of simultaneous pursuit of multiple goals with one practice.

Admittedly, the distinction between compellence and deterrence tends to collapse during wars due to the fluid tactical situation.¹⁸ Similarly, allies may be alarmed rather than reassured (or both, if allied elite opinion diverges from popular opinion) by actions taken in search of compellence or reassurance.

Conversely, a single goal can be obtained using multiple practices either simultaneously or sequentially. Deterrence, for example, can be achieved by threatening to use nuclear weapons and offering to cooperate

(arms control negotiations); or by using and then threatening to use again nuclear weapons (nuclear testing in the midst of the Korean War).

What exactly is meant by deterrence and compellence? In this study these concepts refer to strategic policies whereby one state tries to coerce another state either not to act in a way that it would otherwise do (deterrence) or to stop actions that it has already begun and would otherwise continue (compellence), in both cases by threatening to use military force against it.¹⁹ When the threat is to be implemented by a military practice involving nuclear weapons, the policy is termed *nuclear deterrence* or *nuclear compellence*.

Such strategic policies may be employed in the course of routine interstate relations (including conflictual relations) or in confrontational crises between states. Accordingly, this study distinguishes between *general* and *immediate* deterrence and compellence. These two terms indicate the different circumstances in which compellence or deterrence is attempted.

Following Patrick Morgan, general deterrence is defined as the use of military force by one state to coerce another state not to act in a way that it would otherwise do and is deemed objectionable, *although neither state is about to mount an attack on the other*.²⁰

This study extends this concept by defining general compellence as the use of military force by one state to stop action by another state that it has already begun and would otherwise continue and is deemed objectionable, *although neither state is about to mount an attack on the other*.

In contrast, Morgan defines *immediate deterrence* as relating to situations in which at least one state is considering actions (such as military attack) against the other, which is itself threatening to retaliate with military force to prevent the objectionable actions.²¹

As in the case of general deterrence, this study extends Morgan's concept of *immediate compellence* to refer to situations in which at least one state uses military capabilities to coerce another state to stop objectionable actions that it has already begun. In the Korean context, "immediate" situations are taken to mean the starting of a war between states party to the conflict, or the launching of a provocative attack by one state on another state's interests.

Historically, only four policies derived in table 1 have actual historical correlates, strategic content, and nuclear ideologies or historical lessons. The next section expands on the first three of these policies and lessons which correspond roughly with Hiroshima/Nagasaki, the Korean War and U.S. crisis behavior, and the Cuban missile crisis and its aftermath. Despite Korea's central role in the generation of the second and third historical lessons (chapters 2 and 3), the fourth and to date final lesson—the utility and urgency of nuclear arms control—has yet to be learned in Korea itself.

Actual nuclear policy in Korea has evolved into an incomplete hybrid drawing on elements of all three of these historical lessons, dubbed inflexible response in this study. It is this mix of contending policy currents and contradictory and inconsistent policies that characterizes U.S. nuclear strategy in Korea today. (It could be summarized in table 1 as a combination of C1, D1, C2, D2, and R2!) This abstract formulation of inflexible response is simply a reformulation of how the U.S. Army's organizational interest referred to above is expressed in political and military reality. That is, the Army's nuclear bureaucracy in Korea is itself a source of the disorder that exists in Korea—and interacts in potentially lethal ways with the geopolitical and local causes of instability.

The U.S. Army's actions during a confrontation with the north in 1976 illustrates this point. On August 18, North Korean guards killed an American soldier during a dispute over the pruning of a tree in the demilitarized zone in Korea.

At the time, the U.S. commander in Korea, Gen. Richard Stilwell, put U.S. and South Korean ground troops along the demilitarized zone on full alert (or Defense Condition 3). His deputy, Gen. Jack Cushman, deployed his nuclear-capable artillery as visibly as possible along the demilitarized zone while U.S. and South Korean forces forcibly cut down the offending tree in the zone.²² In response, North Korean forces went onto full war alert too.²³

Stilwell later revealed the mentality that he and then South Korean president Park Chung Hee shared in the midst of this crisis. "We hoped that they might meet us around the base of the tree," he said, "and we would perhaps bash in a few skulls with karate chops, club, and what-not."²⁴

Compellence versus Deterrence

Strategic policies and historical lessons are not stored on someone's mental shelf ready for the taking. Rather, they were hammered out by strategic intellectuals reflecting on the course of history. The first two and most important historical lessons were the result of the impact of strategic bombing and nuclear weapons on the outcomes of World War II and the Korean War.

In particular, the rollback policy current (especially in the army) drew the lesson from Japan in 1945 that nuclear weapons could be used to win wars and gain geopolitical advantage (chapter 1). The militant containment policy current converged on the contrary view based on the Korean War that nuclear weapons could only be used to threaten, not fight another state (chapters 1, 2).

The first lesson portrayed nuclear weapons as narrowly conceived military means of war to be *used* to obtain total victory. This idea derived from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, from which American strategists concluded that nuclear weapons could force an enemy into complete capitulation—that is, for *immediate compellence*.²⁵

The second lesson held nuclear weapons to be *threat* devices with which to conduct psychological warfare. This idea stemmed from the subsequent four years of U.S. nuclear monopoly between 1945 and 1949. During this period, U.S. strategists speculated that nuclear weapons could be used to dissuade the Soviet Union from challenging American interests outside Soviet territory—that is, for *general deterrence*.

The Soviet nuclear test in 1949 ended the U.S. monopoly, making moot the concept that nuclear monopoly would deter the Soviets. In the American view, the North Korean attack on South Korea in June 1950 proved that nuclear weapons were a weak reed on which to base deterrence. Moreover, they discovered that they could not simply revert to nuclear warfighting on the Hiroshima model. Early in the Korean War it became obvious that nuclear duopoly was synonymous with a mutual vulnerability that precluded nuclear warfighting (chapter 2).

Consequently, the United States made *political* rather than military use of nuclear threats to compel China and North Korea to terminate the war. At the end of the war, therefore, U.S. strategists committed to containment policy believed that nuclear threats were of limited utility. They could be used only to disengage fighting forces on acceptable political terms—that is, the restoration of the pre-1950 status quo in Korea. Instead of achieving total victory, nuclear *threats* could only achieve limited enemy compliance with U.S. political goals in protracted, limited wars—wars that Americans had thought until the Korean War had been made obsolete by nuclear weapons.

In less than a decade, the United States had tested the utility of nuclear force in four very different policies: first, immediate compellence based on warfighting (Japan); second, general deterrence based on threats (Soviet Union); third, immediate deterrence based on threats (Korea); and fourth, immediate compellence based on threats backed up by preparations for warfighting (Korea).

U.S. policy in Korea has vacillated ever since between these ideological poles of warfighting versus threat and compellence versus deterrence. That American leaders choose inconsistent nuclear policies or draw eclectically from different historical lessons is not surprising, for they are constantly buffeted by contending policy currents. President Richard Nixon, for example, favored realpolitik containment policies that employed strategic diplomacy as well as military force to stabilize nuclear deterrence. Yet Nixon reverted to nuclear compellence based on nuclear threats during confrontations with North Korea in 1968 and 1969.

In the 1968 *Pueblo* crisis, he found that he had little choice in the matter because the only relevant military capability at hand (F-4 bombers at airfields in Korea) were rigged for and armed with nuclear weapons and could not be refitted in time to aid the beleaguered ship.²⁶

This military posture was a holdover from an earlier era. It was compatible with rollback goals based on a nuclear warfighting practice and even with deterrence goals based on nuclear threats—but not with diplomacy backed by arms in a negotiation (cooperation) with an adversary. Thus, the nuclear forces in Korea embodied the de facto policy of inflexible response in Korea—but inflexibility was the last thing that Nixon was looking for at the outset of a crisis.

Political leaders often discover belatedly that their options are constrained by the embodiment of obsolete policies in military force postures by entrenched organizational interests. Worse still, organizational pathologies and ingrained practices held over from the past in military organizations may unleash practices that have inadvertent effects not sought in current policy. Even if political leaders are aware of these anomalies—and often they are not—they may not be able to control them.

In Korea, nuclear war plans converted the peninsula into a theater of the absurd. In 1968, for example, the U.S. Army planned to block a North Korean advance through Seoul by destroying the Han River bridge with a nuclear weapons. That war plans entailed the nuclear annihilation of Seoul and its population was the insane, paradoxical result of this policy process (see Chapter 3).

Extended Deterrence and Reassurance

After the Korean War, the U.S. military prepared to fight nuclear war under the public banner of deterrence. In their secret war plans, however, they planned to use nuclear weapons to win and end another war with North Korea and China. Offshore, the navy and the air force locked horns in a drive for leadership over nuclear strategy. The resulting duplication of nuclear forces and missions endowed the United States with a vast nuclear arsenal in East Asia available for either deterrence or compellence.²⁷

The forward deployment of nuclear weapons in the 1950s was aimed not only at achieving immediate or general deterrence against adversaries that might attack the United States; it also enabled the United States to build a system of military alliances in Europe and the Pacific undergirded by nuclear weapons. Thus, deterrence came to mean *extended* deterrence—that is, the commitment to American friends or allies that U.S. nuclear weapons would be used to halt a conventional or nuclear attack on them.²⁸

Concurrently, however, a third strategic goal was added to the demands that U.S. policymakers made of their nuclear forces: *reassurance*. Nuclear threats during the Korean War and later in the 1958 Taiwan Straits crisis visibly alarmed U.S. allies who feared being sacrificed in a superpower shootout. At the same time, the implausibility of the U.S. massive retaliation doctrine for nuclear warfighting sowed fears of American abandonment in wartime (chapter 3). Thus, reassurance of the contrary fears and desires of nuclear allies became a major imperative for the U.S. State Department in the late 1950s.

The most important doctrinal expression of reassurance in Asia was the “neither confirm nor deny” policy promulgated in response to the popular opposition to U.S. ground nuclear forces in Japan between 1955 and 1960. Led by Robert McNamara, however, the U.S. military grabbed the reassurance mission from the State Department in the early 1960s. To reassure U.S. allies, they developed and deployed a new generation of theater nuclear weapons and articulated a new nuclear doctrine for NATO known as flexible response (chapter 4). Flexible response was tailored to reassure the European allies by keeping U.S. nuclear weapons on the ground in Europe.

The inverse was true of Japan. Immense populist protests had forced the eviction of ground-based nuclear weapons from Japan in 1960. Thereafter, U.S. strategists argued that they could reassure the Japanese elite by implicitly extending nuclear deterrence to Japan from the U.S. nuclear weapons stationed in South Korea or aboard the U.S. Seventh Fleet. In Korea, the state brooked no opposition to ground-based nuclear weapons, resolving the dilemma posed by the repugnance felt by the Japanese at the presence of nuclear weapons—a psychological cost displaced onto and borne henceforth by the Koreans.

Inflexible Response

Under pressure from the NATO allies, the U.S. Army finally shifted its doctrine in the early 1970s from nuclear warfighting for compellence to nuclear warfighting for deterrence. The transformation, however, was never completed. The inherent paradoxes of trying to apply nuclear weapons to a battlefield defeated the strategists charged with developing a coherent nuclear doctrine.

This shift led to important but relatively small adjustments in the disposition of U.S. nuclear forces in Korea. For the most part, however, the U.S. Army in Korea continued routinely to apply standard operating procedures and organizational rules of thumb to plan nuclear campaigns as if they were still living in the 1950s.

In contrast with Europe where flexible response doctrine and the new forces developed dialectically, the army in Korea spliced new generations of tactical nuclear weapons onto doctrinal hangovers from the era of massive retaliation. In short, nuclear doctrine in Korea exhibited an inflexible response (Chapter 4).

Throughout the period of inflexible response, U.S. officials in Washington drew on the two major historical lessons guiding U.S. nuclear policy in a selective and inconsistent fashion. They forgot or ignored instances that cast doubt on the efficacy of nuclear threats and recalled those events that confirmed their prejudices.

Nuclear deterrence has proved particularly dubious against North Korea. Faced with North Korean provocations read as “deterrence failures,” American leaders have slipped quickly from seeking general nuclear deterrence to striving for immediate compellence. When they tried to coerce North Korea with nuclear threats, they harked back to John Foster Dulles’s belief that his nuclear threats ended the Korean War. When the Army trained its guns on Panmunjon in 1976, the ghost of Douglas MacArthur, the primary advocate of nuclear rollback in the Korean War, stalked Korea.

The de facto doctrine of inflexible response therefore predisposes U.S. leaders to end a war in Korea with nuclear weapons. In crises, the nuclear warfighting forces and doctrines have burst through the thin veneer of deterrence rhetoric. Whatever a U.S. president’s predilections, the force structure itself suggests that a nuclear solution is feasible. Ironically, that same force structure may demand a nuclear solution by provoking North Korean preemptive strikes.

Given the external stakes, it is improbable that a U.S. president would ever order the preemptive first use of nuclear weapons against North Korea, whether for deterrence, compellence, or reassurance. But retaliatory first use to compel North Korea to capitulate or negotiate is another matter. Pushed hard enough, a U.S. president could escalate to first use in Korea. How hard is hard? Nobody knows where the nuclear threshold lies, or whether it could be reached at all in another Korean War.

Of course, should this threshold be surpassed, the United States does not need nuclear weapons on the ground in Korea to escalate to retaliatory first use against North Korea. It could equally well deliver nuclear weapons on cruise missiles or aircraft carriers offshore. The stationing of nuclear weapons in Korea, therefore, is dangerous not because it makes possible nuclear war in Korea, but because it introduces disorderly and unruly nuclear forces into crises. These nuclear elements could lead American leaders to entertain nuclear strikes or face loss of communications with and/or control over ground based nuclear weapons fielded in a war zone (see chapters 7 and 12).

This possibility was prefigured in the 1976 crisis with North Korea referred to earlier when U.S. nuclear capable artillery forces were put on the highest possible alert level. At the time, then U.S. Commander in Korea Gen. Richard Stilwell told his seniors in Hawaii and Washington that "I looked over all the comcos [communications] assets, and there was just no way we could arrange communications below my headquarters."²⁹ In fact, the general was telling a half truth, as he had purposely arranged the communications so as to preclude being bypassed by the national command in Washington (see chapter 4).

Withdrawal

A key example of the power of organizational interests in maintaining the policy of militant containment in Korea, and thus the nuclear dilemma, occurred during the Carter administration.

President Carter's decision in 1976 to withdraw U.S. ground troops and nuclear weapons from Korea collided immediately with institutions interested in keeping nuclear weapons involved in the Korean conflict, whether for nuclear deterrence, compellence, or reassurance. In 1976-77, with the lessons of August 1976 still fresh in its collective mind, the U.S. Army was as determined as ever to buttress its conventional forces with nuclear "insurance." To counter Carter, the military therefore accelerated nuclear war planning and integration of U.S. and South Korean military commands under the twin banners of nuclear deterrence and reassurance.

Worried about the impact on Japan of the U.S. withdrawal from Korea, the State Department hatched a bureaucratic plot with the military and selected congressional factions to reverse Carter's policy (Chapter 5). They were greatly assisted in this task by the South Korea's signals in 1978 that it would renege on its non-proliferation commitment if the United States pulled out its ground troops. Their move buttressed the "reassurance" rationale for keeping the troops in Korea and strengthened the hand of organizational interests dedicated to staying put.

These strategems united the realpolitik and militant containment currents against their own policy of withdrawal from Korea. Although they differed over the rationale and timing of the withdrawal, they joined forces to defeat the unilateralist "cut and run" policy of the trilateralist and isolationist currents that fed into Carter's policy. A coalition embracing U.S. allied elites in Korea, the U.S. Army, the State Department, and Congress overruled Carter and ensured that the troops and nuclear weapons were kept in Korea.

Shift to Warfighting

Rollback vaulted back into the saddle of power when President Reagan entered the White House in 1981. The Reagan administration emphasized nuclear strategy in Korea even more than the Ford and Carter administrations had. The military ostentatiously upgraded, deployed, and exercised its nuclear forces. The State Department verbally “rattled the rockets.” By the mid-1980s, U.S. nuclear forces in Korea encompassed an extensive organizational and physical infrastructure (chapter 6).

A nuclear escalation spiral in Korea is only conceivable because the U.S. army has tapped deep roots in Korea. Without the army’s forward deployment in Korea, the United States would not keep its ground-based nuclear weapons in Korea. “It is assumed,” stated one report to the army in 1975, “that there would be no nuclear weapons left in Korea unless at least some ground forces are retained.”³⁰

It is the army’s operational doctrines, standard operating procedures, and rules of thumb for nuclear war that threaten to controvert strategic goals. The army itself, therefore, is a crucial, independent variable in the nuclear escalation equation, distinct from the obvious volcanic potential of Korean society and the geopolitical fault lines that converge on the peninsula. For this reason, the disorderly structures and contradictory operating characteristics of its nuclear forces in Korea bear close examination (chapters 6 and 7).

U.S. nuclear forces in Korea are not alone. The U.S. Army also integrated South Korean forces directly into the implementation of nuclear strategy (Chapter 7). This collaboration reflects the pervasive penetration of the South Korean military by its American progenitor, the U.S. Army, ever in search of anchors for its organizational interest in remaining in Korea. It is also a contradictory strategy that simultaneously promotes and contains South Korean nuclear proliferation. More recently, it has created a political headache for the State Department by fueling a South Korean public debate about the legitimacy of the nuclear strategy.

Proponents of containment, whether they are of a militant or realpolitik bent, are trapped in a hall of mirrors of their own making when they examine the impact of nuclear threats on North Korea (chapters 8 and 9). They are unaware or deny that their multiple and sometimes inconsistent pursuit of deterrence, compellence and reassurance may have evoked irrational or unanticipated reactions from both North and South Korea.

In particular, their unbridled pursuit of nuclear coercive diplomacy has arguably destabilized conventional deterrence in Korea. North Korea reacted to the escalation of U.S. nuclear threats with its own massive buildup of offensive forces after 1976. South Korea and the United States

have more than matched this buildup, often introducing weapons of new intensity and firepower before the north.

Far from compelling or deterring North Korea, therefore, nuclear threats induced paranoia and provocative behavior. Naturally, this response looks irrational to Americans. The view looking south from Pyongyang, however, is very different from that looking north from Seoul (chapter 8).

Admittedly, it is difficult to know precisely how North Koreans perceive U.S. nuclear threats. The impact may be inferred from a variety of indicators, including North Korean: propaganda; military posture; force structure and composition; doctrine; exercises; acts of defiance and compliance with American dictates; and attitudes toward erstwhile allies. Due to the inaccessibility of North Korean leaders and the closed nature of their political deliberations, it is impossible to determine definitively their "true" intentions.

But whether deterrence or compellence even exist (let alone fail) depends crucially on whether North Korea pursues aggressive or defensive goals with respect to South Korea. A good case can be made that North Korea has adopted an offensive deterrent to counter the nuclear threat. This strategy recalls North Korea's behavior in the summer of 1950 when it preempted what it perceived to be an imminent South Korean attack. It has led to a "sitzkrieg" or military shouting match and standoff with South Korea and the United States at the demilitarized zone on an astonishing scale and with awesome potential for violence (chapter 10).

If North Korea does not intend to invade at the drop of a hat, then nuclear threats do not immediately deter North Korea. If North Korea does not intend to attack at all, nuclear weapons are simply irrelevant to general deterrence. Unfortunately, nuclear threats may provide North Korea with strong military reasons to preempt what Pyongyang could perceive to be pending nuclear attack by the United States and South Korea. In short, nuclear threats may undermine conventional military deterrence against hypothetical North Korean attack.

Powderkeg

Given the mutual fear of surprise attack that exists in Korea, the possibility that conventional war could erupt is all too real. Conventional war between the two Koreas could be the first step down a nuclear warpath (chapter 11).

The north-south hostility ensures that favorable trends for South Korea translate usually into fearful setbacks for North Korea and vice versa. As a result, the North Koreans have embraced the Soviet Union, ensuring

that both Koreas were party to the cold war in Northeast Asia. Far from reducing tensions in Korea, therefore, the American tilt toward China after 1978 has increased superpower rivalry in Korea. Both Koreas have been eager to exploit the opportunities created by the great power shifts, but fear the enhanced dangers flowing from the same source.

Due to this confluence of external and internal factors, Korea remains divided and hostile. Far from relaxing, South Korea has kept its bellicose stance toward the north and remains as fearful and suspicious as ever of its intentions. On the one hand, the national security elite in Seoul see an unabated threat to the north. On the other, they do not wholeheartedly believe American assurances that American forces will remain in Korea. The benign trends in the international environment—including contact with China and the Soviet Union—make the national security elite in Seoul more confident of their eventual victory over North Korea. But the repression of the Chinese democratic movement has also fueled South Korean fears that Beijing might not block a North Korean attack on the South.

Paradoxically, the American anti-Soviet campaign—led by the U.S. Navy in the West Pacific—has been a pitfall as well as an opportunity for South Korea. The isolation of North Korea and the Reagan administration's pressure on the Soviet Union have forced the two allies much closer together, creating an increased North Korean–Soviet combined threat and raising new specters of insecurity in Seoul. So far, détente in Europe has not led to an equivalent breakthrough between Japan and the Soviet Union which might motivate the Soviet Union to reduce its support for Kim Il Sung. Moreover, the recent Sino-Soviet rapprochement reminds South Koreans of 1950 when Pyongyang could count on support from its nominally united allies, China and the Soviet Union. The two Koreas remain in a state of perpetual war, even after brief official and unofficial contacts in the early 1980s.

In a war, U.S. nuclear weapons would be swept up in a storm of intense violence as North Koreans strain to hit nuclear storage depots, command posts, communication lines, and delivery systems and units. American commanders could lose communications with nuclear-armed squads. Worse still, they could lose control of nuclear weapons altogether in North Korean ambush or South Korean mutiny. Either way, nuclear weapons could be used without authorization. American first use could also result from a conscious decision to stun North Korean forces or to force North Korea to terminate the war (chapters 7 and 11).

Far from reducing north-south tensions, U.S. policy in Korea, particularly nuclear strategies, has sown the seeds of a catastrophic global war in this ongoing regional conflict. The recent diplomatic contacts between North Korea and the United States have not ruled out this possibility.

Meetings with North Korean officials in December 1988 and January 1989 in Beijing at North Korea's instigation did indicate that officials from a more internationalist current in Washington are open to contact outside of military channels at Panmunjon. But the encounter opened doors that neither side was willing to walk through. The talks revealed Pyongyang's desperation and division in the face of external pressure more than they indicated that hostilities in Korea were relaxing.³¹ Meanwhile, the two Koreas continue to hurl abuse at each other and jostle for political and military advantage.

All the while, three nuclear-armed great powers maneuver around Korea, their forces mingling and overlapping. The potential for purposeful or inadvertent escalation from a war in Korea to a much bigger war cannot be denied (chapter 12). American first use in Korea could spill over to an offshore superpower shootout or to a three-way American-Chinese-Soviet confrontation in and around Korea. This escalation potential stems from the superpowers' naval nuclear arms race in the North Pacific and the almost total lack of nuclear or conventional arms control in the Asian-Pacific region. Provocative U.S.-allied naval and air exercises continue in the North Pacific despite the INF Treaty and the scrapping of the iron curtain in Europe by internationalist policy currents responsive to Mikhail Gorbachev's overtures, most recently with the 1989 Pacex naval exercise. U.S. and Soviet national security organizations entrenched in Northeast Asia have kinetic energy that could flare up into hostility with little notice.

Whether intended or inadvertent, a U.S. nuclear attack on North Korea—a security buffer state for both China and the Soviet Union—could consume the great-power triangle in a nuclear conflagration on a global scale. The status quo in Korea therefore remains extraordinarily dangerous. As Rand analyst Charles Wolf wrote in 1964, U.S. forces in Korea are a nuclear “tripwire and powderkeg.”³²

Proliferation Potential

The past stress on nuclear forces for nuclear deterrence or compellence has convinced powerful elements of South Korea's security elite that nuclear weapons are necessary to defend against North Korea. The South Koreans did not hesitate to seek a homegrown bomb until U.S. threats to withdraw U.S. extended deterrence compelled Seoul to abandon this drive. Moreover, they have continued to accumulate a near-nuclear option and have been caught in various proliferation-related “hanky-panky” (chapter 13). Clearly, it is possible to provide too much reassurance by overemphasizing nuclear deterrence and compellence.

South Korea's leaders have been impressed for too long by the U.S. "demonstration effect" as to the utility of nuclear weapons for them simply to abandon their latent nuclear aspirations. Their drive for great-power status in East Asia reinforces this tendency. Should North Korea give them the slightest excuse, the United States will be unable to contain South Korea's acquisition of further capabilities. Korea therefore combines unrecognized escalation potential with an ominous proliferation potential (chapter 14).

The risks posed by the current U.S. strategy of nuclear deterrence in Korea make it urgent to change U.S. policy. Withdrawing nuclear weapons from Korea is a feasible and important immediate step. But the continued presence of U.S. troops aimed at North Korea, stationed either in the south or offshore, could still drag the United States into a war involving nuclear forces.

Thus, a precipitate U.S. withdrawal—departing without first securing a political and military settlement of the Korean conflict—would leave behind the heavily armed antagonists. The restraining influence of the United States on the south would be lost if the United States simply pulled the plug, as Jimmy Carter tried to do in 1976. If, after a U.S. pullout, the two Koreas were to fly at each other's throats, it is highly likely that the great powers would be involved in the war. Because of Korea's proximity to China and the Soviet Union and to U.S. dependence on bases in Japan to fight in Korea, such a war would have an inherent tendency to escalate.

Moreover, a unilateral U.S. pullout could prompt one or both Koreas to develop its own homemade nuclear bomb. Nuclear proliferation in Korea would not only undermine the global nonproliferation regime; it could compel each Korea preemptively to strike the other, triggering a potentially widening nuclear conflict. In short, the United States runs the risk of nuclear war whether it stays put or walks away from Korea (chapter 15).

Disarming Korea

Given the potential costs of such a war, a rethinking and reformulation of the premises of U.S. policy in Korea is urgently needed. If the United States fails to change its policies, the standoff in Korea is likely to worsen. If it hardens into a deadlock—and all the elements are there—war could break out. In that event, the American trip wire could ignite the nuclear fuse in Korea to the Pacific powderkeg.

The policy steps that should be taken are obvious: denuclearize Korea as part of a mutual reduction of offensive military forces in Korea; nurture the dismantling and democratization of the bureaucratic-authoritarian

state in the south and the dynastic, Stalinist-corporatist state in the north; recognize North Korea and engage it diplomatically; strive to neutralize Korea so that it can serve as a great-power buffer zone while insulating it from great power affairs (chapter 15).

Unfortunately, North Korea will not be encouraged to open up or to liberalize politically by the gale of anti-Stalinist *glasnost* blowing over the Soviet border. The political instability in China that erupted after a decade of modernization will reinforce Pyongyang's xenophobic and autarchic mentality.

The line-up of U.S. bureaucratic interests does not augur much better for a drastic overhaul of U.S. policy toward Korea. After derailing Carter's withdrawal policy, U.S. militarized diplomacy in East Asia ushered in a second cold war in Northeast Asia. In this climate, the Reagan rollbackers and held-over containment hardliners and their delighted South Korean counterparts spurned all North Korean offers to talk after 1980—including those judged by Korea hands in the State Department to be authentic.

The warm ocean of political economy that has melted the cold war in much of Europe and East Asia (before the massacre in Beijing halted the thaw) has not cracked the glacier in Korea. The limited South Korean and U.S. overtures to North Korea after the Olympics barely melted the surface. Like Park Chung Hee after 1972, South Korean President Roh Tae Woo used these contacts to outmaneuver domestic opponents of the Seoul regime rather than to find common ground with Pyongyang. On the other side, North Korean gambits have been aimed mostly at exploiting the political difficulties of the Seoul regime rather than achieving a major breakthrough that would move the glacier.

Nor can one entertain much hope that the Bush administration will override the organizational interests anchored in Korea, whether they be the U.S. military hankering to preserve its unique relationship with the South Korean Army, or the State Department, anxious to protect its leverage in Tokyo. The omens might look propitious, with ex-CIA men in the White House (Bush) and in the U.S. embassies in Seoul (Gregg) and Beijing (Lilley). On the face of it, their ability to act decisively in Korea is strengthened by strong domestic demands for a contraction of overseas military commitments.

But the Bush administration is more likely to respond to pressure for cuts in the U.S. military budget by withdrawing (expensive) forces from Europe before they withdraw forces from Korea (where they can be kept cheaply).³³

If U.S. troops are withdrawn (in response to congressional pressure), then the Republican bent is to place even greater emphasis on nuclear threats to "substitute" for conventional forces. In August 1989, for exam-

ple, U.S. commander in Korea, Gen. Louis Menetry said that South Korea could stand on its own feet by the mid-1990s but that a residual U.S. force might stay in South Korea for “symbolic” (that is, nuclear deterrence) reasons.³⁴

Like the Japanese before them, the South Koreans will also pick up much more of the tab for keeping U.S. forces in Korea. For all these reasons, it is unlikely that President Bush will place Korea high on his foreign policy agenda, let alone withdraw nuclear weapons.

Cracked Consensus

The locus of potential change, therefore, rests in South Korea. In fact, the strongest force for removal of nuclear weapons from Korea is the popular opposition in South Korea (chapter 16).

Unlike the South Korean military, most ordinary Koreans are not nuclear collaborators. Indeed, the South Korean political opposition is guided by a nationalist agenda that collides with U.S. nuclear strategy in Korea and hence with the interests of the U.S. Army and its South Korean ally-in-arms.

The presence of nuclear weapons is a potent weapon used by critics to attack the nationalist credentials of the Seoul regime. Until recently, anti-Communist ideology sufficed to legitimate the nuclear strategy in South Korea, while repression supplemented ideology whenever it proved incapable of ensuring compliance. Now that the anti-Communist consensus has cracked badly, the nuclear strategy has no ideological pillars.

Under intense pressure from below, the South Korean state may try to “trade in” U.S. nuclear weapons in Korea for reductions in North Korean offensive arms to undercut the antinuclear appeal of its radical opponents. A strategy of nuclear withdrawal (assuming the United States concurred) would also permit the South Korean regime to keep U.S. troops in Korea—where, being cheaper than redeploying them in the United States, the American national security establishment wants them to stay, albeit for regional interventions rather than as a force aimed at North Korea. The elite opposition would almost certainly accommodate this strategy of separating nuclear from troop withdrawal.

Of course, there is nothing ordained about this path of action. The U.S. Army, for example, values the influence over South Korean authorities that flows from its operational control of the South Korean military. It is inconceivable that the South Korean military will allow the U.S. military to retain this position much longer unless the United States keeps nuclear weapons in Korea. Removal of nuclear weapons greatly threatens the army’s organizational interest in Korea as it would undercut the ra-

tionale for the army's command supremacy. A major revision of command relations and an adjustment in the relative status and power of American and South Korean organizational interests would flow from the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons. All these organizational impediments would have to be overcome before nuclear weapons would be removed.

Moreover, hard-liners in South Korea may sabotage talks with North Korea by demanding unacceptable political concessions from Pyongyang in return for nuclear withdrawal. This tactic would place the onus for failure on the north while satisfying Seoul's constituency in the U.S. Army and its own military ranks.

Nonetheless, one can be cautiously optimistic. Although the final outcome is uncertain, political opposition may force the United States to remove its ground-based nuclear forces from the peninsula. This removal would relieve the political headaches caused by nuclear weapons for the United States in Korea. In spite of the U.S. Army, therefore, the United States would probably comply with an official South Korean request for the removal of ground-based nuclear weapons. The nuclear onus in Korea would then fall to the fleet-footed U.S. Navy, as occurred in Japan in 1960.

The antinuclear opposition in South Korea follows a historical lesson very different from those that have informed American strategic thinking. They look not to warfighting or to psychological warfare with nuclear weapons, but to the experience of Koreans who were bombed at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When they look into the faces of the Korean nuclear survivors, they see a future that may overwhelm Korea unless they rid the nation of nuclear weapons. It is this pervasive opposition that may evict the army and its nuclear weapons, putting Korea onto a path of peaceful negotiation, force reductions, and political reconciliation.

Wonpok Huisangcha

Like its Japanese predecessor, the peace movement in Korea is part of a broad social and political opposition that integrates nuclear issues with those of democracy. The upwelling of Japanese revulsion against nuclear alliance in the 1950s drew on antimilitarist and pacifist sentiments largely grounded in the experience of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. In Korea, however, the nuclear issue is framed more in terms of democratic reunification and nationalism than in pacifism and internationalism.

But the political lesson of Korean nuclear survivors resembles that of the Japanese *hibakusha*. The traumatic lives of the Koreans known as *wonpok huisangcha* who survived the *pikaton*, or "flash bombs," at Hiroshima and Nagasaki are living metaphors of the fate portended by nuclear

strategy in Korea—for Koreans, and for the whole world (chapter 17). Most Americans are ignorant of the epic lives of these invisible Koreans who were caught in the crossfire of World War II.³⁵

First sacrificed on the altar of great power at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the *wonpok* have watched the United States introduce to Korea the weapons that destroyed their lives. Many *wonpok* believe that eventually the nuclear strategy will ignite the fuse to the Pacific powderkeg. They are determined therefore to sweep nuclear weapons out of Korea.

They reject the two historical lessons of World War II and the Korean War that have guided U.S. nuclear strategy in Korea—that nuclear weapons can be used to win wars, and that nuclear threats can be used to deter or to compel adversaries. They draw a different lesson—that being infinite, the potential costs of nuclear war are too great for even the survivors to bear. They should know.

Part I
Bonus Fear

1

Historical Lessons

Must not let Commies dictate all imp. [important] moves. UNC [UN Command] tactical position is too strong for us to appease. Time working for us.

September 26, 1951

We were now negotiating from the position of a military stalemate.

February 14, 1952

— Adm. C. Turner Joy, principal U.S. negotiator, Panmunjon¹

The fate of the Korean nation has been intertwined with nuclear geopolitics from the outset of the nuclear era. This chapter outlines two historical lessons formed in the crucibles of World War II and the Korean War, lessons that remain central to U.S. nuclear strategy.

It shows that the first historical lesson drawn by American strategists from the nuclear bombing of Japan was that nuclear weapons could be used to achieve geopolitical goals. The American decision to occupy Korea and to divide it at the 38th Parallel flowed directly from the decision to use the Bomb in 1945. The division of Korea was entailed by the U. S. use of the Bomb to hasten the end of the war and to contain Soviet power in the Far East. It doomed to failure internationalist sentiments expressed at Yalta and Potsdam that Korea should become a trusteeship, and it marked the early emergence of containment policy in action.

It also demonstrates that the second historical lesson was learned fighting the Korean War. Key U.S. policymakers believed that making nuclear threats terminated the war on terms acceptable to the United States.

In both cases, the historical lessons have been embellished with often contradictory or false corollaries, sometimes of mythic proportions.

From the Means—Strategic Bombing . . .

The most important historical lesson of World War II for U.S. nuclear strategy grew out of reflection on the role of strategic bombing and the efficacy of nuclear weapons in war.

World War II ended in Japan in an unprecedented frenzy of violence unleashed on both sides. In a massive raid on Tokyo on March 10, 1945, bombers directed by General Le May ringed densely populated downtown Tokyo with incendiary bombs. Forty square kilometers burned that night in which more than eighty thousand civilians were trapped and burned to death by the firestorm.² The impersonal violence inflicted by U.S. saturation bombing of Japanese cities matched the Japanese military in their personal ferocity, most developed in the kamikaze bomber units. The war was to end not with a whimper, but an enormous bang. It was, as John Dower puts it, war without mercy.³

Not all Americans agreed that firebombing civilian targets was effective or desirable. Brig. Gen. Haywood Hansell, the director of strategic bombing until mid-January 1945, opposed it as immoral. Many cynics viewed the strategy as worse than immoral because they believed it to be militarily ineffective to boot. But skeptics like Hansell were pushed aside and replaced by proponents of strategic bombing led by Gen. Curtis Le May.

Le May believed that strategic bombing was decisive in ending the Pacific war. He also held, as he wrote in April 1945, that "the present stage of development of the air war against Japan presents the AAF [Army Air Force] for the first time with the opportunity of proving the power of the strategic air arm."⁴ To this end, Le May torched fifty-eight Japanese cities between May and August.⁵

It was not much of a moral or military leap to escalate the war against Japan to include nuclear weapons. Afterward, the military saw them matter-of-factly as killing weapons, just like any other weapon. The only question was where and when they would be used again, not if, why, or how.

The strategic bombing that culminated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki breached American military ethical restraints on the slaughter of civilians. Senior air force officers under Le May believed that the entire population of Japan was a military target because the women and children had been conscripted into the home militia. "For us," wrote one, "THERE ARE NO CIVILIANS IN JAPAN."⁶ Thus, the air force bombed area targets whenever bad weather precluded precision bombing of military targets—that is, most of the time. Strafing civilian passenger trains was another favorite tactic.⁷

The first historical lesson, therefore, was strategic in nature and pertained primarily to the military: total victory could be achieved by strategic bombing. Closely related to this lesson was a tactical one: civilians could and should be targeted as a matter of course, and not just military targets such as troops or military infrastructure such as factories or trans-

portation systems. In short, nuclear warfighting was the means, victory the end of nuclear strategy.

. . .To the Ends—Geopolitics

There is little doubt that the primary motivation for bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki was to terminate decisively the war with Japan.⁸ An inhumane means was judged appropriate for use against the Japanese who were viewed as inhuman enemies. Yet the rush to use nuclear weapons against Japan was stimulated by the broader geopolitical implications of nuclear weapons.

The first nuclear test at Alamogordo on July 16, 1945, had motivated President Truman's advisers to press him to stall and delay the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan. They hoped to preempt thereby a Soviet sphere of influence in the Far East like that in Eastern Europe. Until then, U.S. Secretary of War Henry Stimson viewed the A-bomb as a "weak reed" on which to base American diplomacy. Now that it was tested, the bomb seemed to Stimson to be a "colossal reality."⁹

President Truman and U.S. Secretary of State James Byrnes chose to contain Soviet power by unilaterally asserting American power rather than by negotiating limits to the Soviet postwar sphere of influence in the Far East. In short, they viewed the Bomb as the American trump card that would enable them to compel Japan to end the war on terms favorable to the United States with respect to the Soviet Union.

On August 11, 1945, in line with this goal and without consulting its allies, the United States issued the general order for Japanese surrender. By dictating whose forces were to accept Japanese surrender, the United States asserted first right to demarcate territorial boundaries in the Pacific region—including Korea.¹⁰ The United States reserved for itself the prerogative to accept Japanese surrender not only in Japan but wherever its forces were found. This geopolitical appetite pushed the United States to set the 38th Parallel as the dividing line in Korea between Soviet and American occupying forces. On August 14, 1945, the president authorized the military to divide Korea.¹¹

For Koreans, U.S. strategy at the tail end of World War II meant not only that they were bombed at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also that their nation was divided by the geopolitical outcome. As a result, they have lived under the shadow of nuclear war ever since. The die had been cast for the crucible of civil war in Korea and massive external intervention only five years later.

But for the American security elite, the message of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was clear. Nuclear warfighting had helped them to realize their

basic goals of winning Soviet support for Nationalist China and Chinese sovereignty over Manchuria; acceptance of sole American control over Japan; and a foothold in Korea.¹² In addition to the notions that strategic bombing ends wars and that nuclear attack is the most effective form of strategic bombing, the United States learned that nuclear weapons could undergird a geopolitical policy of strategic denial. Within a decade, that strategy was to earn the name containment.

American Lake

In an earlier work, my coauthors and I suggested that the Pacific has long been and remains an "American Lake"—the U.S. Navy's revealing term for the region.¹³ Between 1945 and 1949, the United States dominated the Pacific. It dropped nuclear weapons on Japan without consulting its allies. It occupied Japan, the Philippines, southern Korea, and the Pacific islands, where it ruled by military decree. Shortly thereafter it tested scores of nuclear weapons on Pacific atolls, evicting and irradiating hapless islanders.

Yet U.S. power was already slipping. The military services suffered demobilization at a bewildering pace. The general malaise was intensified during 1949, a year of shocks. China was "lost" to the Chinese Communist party, forcing out fifty thousand U.S. Marines airlifted into China after 1945. The Soviet Bomb had exploded years ahead of the schedule anticipated by American intelligence. Far from being intimidated by U.S. nuclear threats, Stalin and Molotov matched the U.S. nuclear arsenal with weapons of their own. Nuclear weapons had proved to be less useful than anticipated in shaping Soviet behavior in Europe, while the prospect of a united Sino-Soviet bloc in Asia-Pacific looked ominous to Americans. The military services were squabbling over a shrinking military budget, while vying for the leading role in nuclear war. The United States had not settled on a clear strategy to link its forward position in the Pacific to its military power, especially its nuclear weapons.

From Realpolitik . . .

It was not surprising, therefore, that top-level American strategists began to rethink the much vaunted value of nuclear weapons. A great but secret debate occurred as to the role that nuclear weapons should play in U.S. foreign policy.

George Kennan, head of the U.S. State Department's policy planning unit between 1947 and 1950, believed that military strategy should be

guided by political goals, a Clausewitzian view on war. Kennan did not think that the United States needed to equal the Soviets in all types of military force. He argued instead that the United States should match its strengths against Soviet weaknesses. The United States should select and protect only its vital interests. Secondary or peripheral interests should be sacrificed if necessary.

Furthermore, Kennan held that the Soviet Union should be coopted into the international status quo by adroit American carrot-and-stick diplomacy. That is, an agile U.S. foreign policy would try to split the Sino-Soviet bloc and draw the Soviet Union into international life. Though Kennan had written the document that elevated the containment strategy to a powerful policy current, he remained a proponent of Rooseveltian internationalist policies.

From this realpolitik perspective flowed his distinctive view of the role of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons had no place in Kennan's diplomatic toolkit, being useful in his opinion only to deter nuclear attack on the United States. He therefore called for nuclear weapons to be divorced from conventional forces, especially in Europe, and was an early proponent of the no-first-use policy for the United States.

Kennan advised U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson that the United States was at a crossroads in January 1950 with respect to nuclear weapons. "We may regard them as something vital to our conduct of a future war," wrote Kennan, "as something without which our war plans would be emasculated and ineffective—as something which we have resolved, in the face of all the moral and other factors concerned, to employ forthwith and unhesitatingly at the outset of any great military conflict."

"Or we may regard them as something superfluous to our basic military posture," he continued, "as something which we are compelled to hold against the possibility that they might be used by our opponents. In this case, of course, we take care not to build up a reliance on them in our military planning."¹⁴

Nuclear weapons, he wrote, "reach beyond the frontiers of western civilization, to the concepts of warfare which were once familiar to the Asiatic hordes. They cannot really be reconciled with a political purpose directed to shaping, rather than destroying, the lives of the adversary."¹⁵

Since he could not see how they could be used to shape the behavior of an enemy but only to destroy, he recommended to Acheson that they be deemphasized. The United States should negotiate controls with the Soviet Union on development of the H-bomb. By the same logic, he advised Acheson that the United States should acquire minimal nuclear forces and keep them out of international politics.

But Acheson ignored him as the Congress and much of the military were convinced that nuclear weapons held the key to great power status,

in spite of all the political, military, and moral obstacles to translating the potential power into real leverage. Forgoing military superiority (to which nuclear weapons were seen as the key) was tantamount to appeasement as far as these constituencies were concerned.¹⁶

... To Ideological Crusade

In the celebrated National Security Council Memorandum 68 (NSC 68), drafted by Kennan's successor, Paul Nitze, in April 1950, Kennan's containment was transformed from *realpolitik* into an ideology of anti-Communist militancy.

Whereas Kennan had seen containment as a process of selective engagement with the Soviet Union to avoid U.S. overextension, Nitze made an open-ended commitment against "Soviet aggression." Unlike Kennan's strategy of selectively and economically applying military force only to vital interests, Nitze did not discriminate among priorities. Instead, he asserted that American interests were indivisible. The United States, therefore, had to be prepared to intervene to protect those interests wherever they were challenged.

Where Kennan saw openings to exploit differences between the Soviet Union and nationalist liberation movements in the Third World, Nitze saw only a unified, global Communist movement controlled by the Kremlin. Kennan preferred a U.S. foreign policy with no idealistic pretensions, whereas Nitze's NSC 68 proposed a policy that "must light the path to peace and order among nations in a system based on freedom and justice."

"The only sure victory," claimed NSC 68, "lies in the frustration of the Kremlin design by the steady development of the moral and material strength of the free world and its projection into the Soviet world in such a way as to bring about an internal change in the Soviet system."¹⁷

Kennan and Nitze also differed over the place of military power as a means of effecting strategy. Whereas Kennan aimed to counter the Soviets primarily by influencing the psychologies of allied and Soviet elites with diplomatic and economic tools, the hard-liners saw military force as the main way to preserve U.S. interests.

In contrast with Kennan, Nitze saw the "powerful atomic blow" as integral to the U.S. capability "to conduct offensive operations to destroy vital elements of the Soviet war-making capacity, and to keep the enemy off balance until the full offensive strength of the United States and its allies can be brought to bear."¹⁸

Accordingly, NSC 68 recommended that the feasibility of the H-Bomb be investigated—which meant a demonstration test, and inevitably, de-

ployment. Although nuclear threats had not deterred Soviet adventurism since 1945, argued Nitze, the H-bomb promised vast, untapped reserves of potential deterrent power to the policy current that promoted militant containment in Washington.

Popular support for cutting the military budget made it impossible for U.S. forces—already spread thin over far-flung archipelagos of military bases stretching across the world's oceans—to support such a globalist strategy. The Korean War allowed the militant hard-liners to break through the political and economic obstacles to their program.

The war also led U.S. strategists to refine the first historical lesson as to the efficacy of nuclear weapons. Out of the experience of applying the old lesson to the new war came a wholly new lesson.

From Nuclear Warfighting . . .

The military viewed the war as a full-scale laboratory in which to test nuclear warfighting. In March 1951 a Johns Hopkins University research group working for Far East Command in Tokyo reported to the then United Nations commander in Korea, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, that

the Korean War has offered an excellent opportunity for the study of the tactical employment of atomic bombs in support of ground forces. It has been possible to consider the war a kind of laboratory within which everything was at hand in the most realistic proportions except the bomb itself and the means to deliver it.¹⁹

The study was far from academic. “This headquarters,” stated Gen. Doyle Hickey, “is continuing study of [the] report with a view to taking any actions that may be indicated to prepare the Far East Command offensively and defensively for possible employment of nuclear weapons.”²⁰ After reviewing the course of the war, the John Hopkins study informed General MacArthur that there were many “large targets of opportunity” for nuclear attack.²¹

General MacArthur was determined to fight in Korea not to a standstill but to victory. He was equally determined that victory meant the dismantling of Communism in North Korea and the expansion of the war to roll back the Communist victory in China the preceding year. Even while reeling before the North Korean attack, MacArthur was planning to flank the communist attack at Inchon and to destroy Communist sanctuaries in China and the Soviet Union with nuclear weapons. His scheme rested upon nuclear and radiological attacks on Chinese Communist forces, to be exploited by a Nationalist invasion from Taiwan backed by

U.S. Marines. On December 24, 1950, MacArthur singled out “retardation targets” that would require twenty-six nuclear weapons to destroy. For good measure, he requested another eight bombs to be used on troops and airfields.²² As historian Bruce Cumings puts it, this was “rollback with a vengeance.”²³

In reality, however, the Far East Command faced major obstacles to conducting nuclear war in Korea. The Johns Hopkins report found that U.S. forces in Korea were ill-equipped for nuclear warfare. Virtually no U.S. or allied troops had been trained in using nuclear weapons.²⁴ Moreover, Korean roads and bridges could not have supported the enormous artillery pieces needed to fire nuclear projectiles, even if they had been introduced.²⁵ About the only way to deliver a nuclear attack at this stage of the war was via one of the B-29 bombers flying out of Japan and Okinawa. From this distance, it took far too long after locating potential targets to place a nuclear-armed bomber over an actual target for nuclear attack to be a meaningful military tactic.²⁶

This conclusion was confirmed between late September and October 15, 1951, when several simulated nuclear strikes were conducted as Exercise Hudson Harbor in Korea.²⁷ As a result of Hudson Harbor, the U.S. Army confirmed in November 1950 that the problems of delivering nuclear weapons remained unresolved due to inadequate delivery and untimely intelligence.²⁸

Militarily, therefore, the lesson of Korea was plain. American military practice simply could not bridge the yawning gap between nuclear rollback rhetoric and fighting a nuclear war. The direct outcome was a major acceleration of development, testing, and deployment of tactical nuclear weapons.

Following China’s intervention, the United States faced stark choices. Strategically, it could expand the war to China or restore the original dividing line in Korea. Militarily, it could fight with nuclear weapons for rollback, or display nuclear weapons as threat devices for containment. At the level of global strategy, these choices entailed choosing Asia or Europe as top priority in U.S. foreign policy. Those committed to retreat from victory to a return of the status quo ante, however, believed that this goal could only be achieved after U.S. military strength had been asserted anew in Korea. To negotiate a cease-fire while Chinese forces were advancing would be to risk losing all the political objectives for which the United States had fought—keeping China out of the UN, keeping Taiwan in the U.S. bloc, and dictating the terms of the peace treaty with Japan. From this perspective, the Soviet Union, acting through its Chinese proxy, would have won the Korean War and containment would have collapsed as a viable policy.²⁹

By mid-March 1951 Truman was moving to negotiate a settlement

with China to restore the 38th Parallel. This development confronted General MacArthur with a mortal threat. As a presidential aspirant, he could not afford to end his career in a stalemate in Korea. Victory was MacArthur's only road to the Republican nomination in 1952. He therefore blocked Truman's plan, which would have accepted less than victory and allowed Communist North Korea to exist after the war.

On March 24, 1951, he demanded that the Chinese agree to a set of conditions that amounted to an admission of defeat. This move sabotaged the cease-fire initiative, alarmed UN allies, and led to his sacking on April 11.³⁰ With MacArthur went the best hope of Asia's two most virulent advocates of rollback, Syngman Rhee and Chiang Kai-shek. Rollback, however, remained a strong political undercurrent that fed into militant containment.

. . . To Nuclear Compellence, 1950

Truman first tried to exploit nuclear threats against China in 1950. China had signaled that Chinese forces would enter the war if U.S. troops crossed the 38th Parallel in pursuit of North Korean forces. As MacArthur's forces neared the border with North Korea in late November 1950, Chinese troops finally crossed the Yalu and laid a massive and effective ambush. At his November 30, 1950, news conference, held while UN forces reeled into headlong retreat, Truman offhandedly remarked that his administration had always had use of nuclear weapons under "active consideration" and that their use against military or civilian targets was a decision to be made by the military.

His statement followed on the heels of the military's decision in the previous week to launch two studies of the use of nuclear weapons in Korea to block Soviet intervention and to assist UN evacuation from the peninsula.³¹ The day after Truman's press conference, Strategic Air Command was ordered to ready itself to send nuclear bombers to the Far East.³² The operational capability was set up in Okinawa by mid-March 1951.³³

Truman's pronouncement alarmed the Allies, especially in London. British prime minister Clement Attlee flew to Washington to confer with Truman. On December 6, the third morning of his visit, Washington itself was jittery. U.S. early warning radars in Canada had detected formations of objects flying south toward Washington.³⁴ It later emerged that the blips were probably migrating geese.

After assuaging Attlee, Truman set aside public nuclear threats for the duration of his administration. But frustrated by his inability to end the war, he privately fantasized about using nuclear weapons to end the war.

On January 27, 1952, for example, he wrote in his diary that nuclear attacks on Moscow, Leningrad, Beijing, Shanghai, and other Soviet and Chinese cities would end the war.³⁵ But Truman recognized that executing communist cities with nuclear weapons would tear apart NATO and was not politically feasible. He never suggested either to his immediate advisers or to U.S. allies that nuclear attack was a practical option.³⁶

The military, however, continued to plan and ponder how nuclear weapons might be brought to bear. In January 1951 airborne tactical nuclear weapons were tested for the first time, and the air force began to convert fighter-bombers to drop tactical nuclear bombs. For its part, the army concluded on July 5, 1951, that using nuclear weapons “to increase our efficiency of killing” was necessary to break the Korea deadlock in Korea and recommended field tests to develop a doctrine for battlefield use.³⁷

In May 1951, the National Security Council adopted NSC 48/5, a major review of U.S. Far Eastern strategy. It defined the United States’ long term goal as the elimination of Soviet influence in the Far East by forcing a wedge in the Sino-Soviet alliance—that is, rollback. According to NSC 48/5, the best way to detach China from the Soviet Union was to escalate the pressure on China by accelerating Nationalist Chinese covert attacks on the mainland.³⁸

All the while, the military in the field were pressing for authority to use nuclear weapons. In September 1952—the same month that a U.S. test showed that the H-Bomb would work—the U.S. Joint Chiefs cabled the United Nations commander in Korea, General Clark, that he should prepare for all-out war should the armistice negotiations fail, *excluding* chemical and nuclear weapons. But Clark replied that he wanted authority to consider use of nuclear weapons.³⁹ The air force and the navy were anxious to attack Chinese coastal forces. In April the U.S. Joint Chiefs Planning Committee entertained using tactical nuclear weapons against China.

Yet internal studies showed that escalating to nuclear war would not solve the United States’ problems in Korea. One State Department analyst advised that obtaining decisive results would require wide-scale nuclear attack and would engage U.S. forces deeply in an Asian land war to exploit the attack. Moreover, if nuclear attack proved indecisive, then nuclear weapons would have been shown to be paper tigers, with irreparable results on the United States’ global position.⁴⁰

Nuclear Compellence, 1953

Eisenhower was elected in 1952 largely because of his pledge to end the Korean War. He was much more convinced than Truman of the political

utility of nuclear threats. As a military man, he was better equipped to evaluate the military utility of nuclear attacks. As a de facto diplomat in his World War II and NATO roles as supreme military commander, he was also sensitive to the diplomatic dimensions of nuclear war. Accordingly, he played nuclear chess much more seriously than his predecessor. He also see-sawed between achieving compellence by nuclear warfighting versus threats.

Bogged down in an unpopular war, he did not wait long to try to use nuclear weapons to cut the Gordian knot that MacArthur had tied by trying to roll back Communism in North Korea and China. The United Nations Command and Communist negotiators were deadlocked over the terms of the return of prisoners of war. In early February 1953, he began to drop “discreet” hints of nuclear threats.⁴¹

Nuclear weapons began to enter military planning much more directly than they had under Truman. In May 1953 General Clark was instructed to revise his war plan to support a decision to use nuclear weapons if necessary.⁴² At the May 15, 1953, National Security Council meeting, Eisenhower argued that nuclear weapons were cheaper in Korea than conventional weapons.

Anxious to prove the navy’s nuclear mettle, the aircraft carrier USS *Champlain*, with four nuclear bombers aboard, cruised off the Korean coast, waiting for the attack order.⁴³ Not wanting to be left out, the army conducted tests in Nevada of nuclear artillery to send messages to China, the Soviet Union, and Pyongyang. The U.S. Joint Chiefs recognized the relevance of the tests to Korea in a March 27, 1953, study:

The efficacy of atomic weapons in achieving greater results at less cost of effort in furtherance of US objectives in connection with Korea points to the desirability of re-evaluating the policy which now restricts the use of atomic weapons in the Far East . . . In view of the extensive implications of developing an effective conventional capability in the Far East, the timely use of atomic weapons should be considered against military targets affecting operations in Korea, and operationally planned as an adjunct to any possible military course of action involving direct action against Communist China and Manchuria.⁴⁴

War planners began to concentrate on compelling China by nuclear warfighting. On May 19, the U.S. Joint Chiefs recommended launching direct air and naval operations against China to include nuclear weapons. They recommended not a gradual escalation but a surprise knockout punch. On May 20, the National Security Council endorsed the Joint Chiefs recommendation.

Visiting India, U.S. Secretary of State Dulles told Prime Minister Nehru that the United States would bomb China unless the war ended

quickly. He added that the United States had successfully tested nuclear artillery and that the means of delivery had been introduced into the theater—a message he expected to be sent onto Beijing. President Eisenhower had already stated publicly that the Seventh Fleet would no longer restrain the Nationalists from attacking the mainland.⁴⁵ (Privately, of course, the United States was already supporting Nationalist raids.)⁴⁶

American thinking was moving toward a consensus that nuclear weapons had to be used not only in the battlefield of the mind but on the ground in Korea. In February 1953 Dulles told the National Security Council that the taboos on using nuclear weapons had to be broken. At the same meeting, Eisenhower suggested using a tactical nuclear weapon on the Kaesong area, not far from Panmunjon where the armistice negotiators were meeting. By March, both Dulles and Eisenhower were convinced that nuclear weapons had to be made conventional weapons of war. Just how close Eisenhower came to using his nuclear option is revealed in the record of a National Security Council meeting on May 20, 1953. Eisenhower's "only real worry" about the Joint Chiefs' view that "more positive action" would entail nuclear attack on China was the possibility of Soviet intervention. "He feared the Chinese much less," stated the record, "since the blow would fall so swiftly and with such force as to eliminate Chinese Communist intervention."⁴⁷

Eisenhower was enamored of the notion of a rapid military solution to the impasse. Faced with the offsetting costs of alliance disruption that would follow battlefield use, he oscillated between two strategies—ordering battlefield nuclear strikes for military advantage versus issuing nuclear ultimatums to China. "Eisenhower," writes historian Richard Betts, "was interested at least as much in the potential for actually using the weapons on the battlefield as in using them for blackmail."⁴⁸

In spite of the nuclear threats in early 1953, the armistice was not signed until July 27, 1953, after protracted, tortuous negotiations. In April and May, the Chinese launched two major offensives to force the United States to accept the necessity of peace without imposing conditions on the return of Communist prisoners of war.⁴⁹ In May, the United States replied by declaring war on the civilian population. The Strategic Air Command bombed North Korean dams and rice fields to destroy the rice crop and to create famine. The Communist riposte was launched in July and mauled South Korea's elite troops, resulting in the heaviest fighting since the spring of 1951.⁵⁰ This offensive was intended to convey to South Korea's recalcitrant President, Syngman Rhee, that he blocked the armistice at his own peril.⁵¹

Yet Dulles and Eisenhower both claimed afterward that the Chinese and North Koreans were compelled to capitulate at Panmunjon by nuclear threats. Dulles, for example, attributed the end of the war to Communist leaders facing "the possibility that the fighting might, to his own great

peril, soon spread beyond the limits and methods which he had selected." Asked later what brought China to agree to U.S. terms, Eisenhower said simply; "Danger of an atomic war."⁵² Eisenhower repeated this assertion in his memoirs:

One possibility [to bring about an agreement] was to let the Communist authorities understand that, in the absence of satisfactory progress, we intended to move decisively without inhibition in our use of weapons, and would no longer be responsible for confining hostilities on the Korean peninsula.⁵³

There is little doubt that the Chinese took these threats seriously. From November 1950 onward, the Chinese leadership publicly inveighed against popular fears of U.S. nuclear attack. They gave details of protective measures in the popular press as well as accounts of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings.⁵⁴ They intensively indoctrinated their troops against fears of nuclear attack (see chapter 2). The Chinese were undoubtedly aware that American public opinion frequently approved bombing China to end the war and that key Republicans had told Eisenhower that they would support using nuclear weapons against China.⁵⁵ The fact that Mao launched the Chinese nuclear weapons program in 1954—that is, almost immediately after the war's end—also indicates that the Chinese were impressed by the threat *and* the inadequacy of Soviet extended deterrence.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, Chinese military moves made between May and July 1953 suggest that China did not simply cave in before nuclear threats. According to Eisenhower, tacit American nuclear threats in 1953 may have begun as early as February 22 when hints that the United States might escalate were dropped at Panmunjon and Taiwan.⁵⁷ Another vague threat was made by Dulles on May 22, 1953, in India when he told Indian officials that the United States "might extend the area of conflict," which he viewed as a thinly veiled nuclear threat.⁵⁸ In each case, U.S. leaders viewed the subsequent softening of the Chinese negotiating position at Panmunjon as irrefutable evidence of the efficacy of nuclear threats.

The sequence of threats and negotiations, however, suggests that it cannot be argued that nuclear leverage translated directly into political advantage. The Chinese concessions over prisoners of war at the end of March 1953 came *after* Stalin's death had reduced China's confidence that the Soviet Union would deter a U.S. attack on the mainland, whether nuclear or conventional.⁵⁹ Presumably not even Dulles would have claimed that Stalin died of fright induced by U.S. nuclear threats to China.

Similarly, the Chinese did not finally concur with U.S. terms until June 4, 1953, a long fortnight *after* Dulles's May 22 threat. Yet the United States had already revealed the shape of the final settlement to

which China agreed a week *before* the May 22nd threat. There, the United States told the Chinese that they were willing to meet them half-way on the repatriation terms of prisoners of war.

China may have timed its moves to demonstrate that it refused to be cowed by nuclear threats. Thus, it *expanded* its military offensives throughout the “nuclear threat” period of the war. If so, the Chinese must have viewed U.S. nuclear threats and the possibility that these threats would be acted on as part of the cost of obtaining the terms that they were finally offered. Nuclear threats, in this view, indicated American weakness to the Chinese, not strength, and would have convinced the Chinese of the efficacy of *prolonging* the war. As they wrote in 1960, “The resumption of talks . . . was only possible after our resolute struggle against and defeat of the American imperialists.”⁶⁰

Moreover, the Chinese were fully aware that a U.S. nuclear strike on China could have been exploited only by a massive expansion of U.S. and allied conventional military commitments in Korea and China. To them, the United States implementing the nuclear threat would have contradicted its goal of reducing casualties, the nuclear means would have contradicted its transparently obvious end, and the threats would not have been credible.

Although the evidence, as Richard Betts concludes, “does not permit precise conclusions about the efficacy of the nuclear signal” in the Korean War, American leaders ignored this historical ambiguity. Instead, they continued to wave the nuclear stick. To enhance the credibility of Eisenhower’s rhetorical threats, the ninety-second B-36 Bomb Wing flew to Japan, Okinawa, and Guam for a monthlong exercise, Operation Big Stick, in August–September 1953. The official Strategic Air Command history states that Big Stick “demonstrated the U.S. determination to use every means possible to maintain peace in the Far East.”⁶¹ By this stage, the command had long had the hardware necessary to launch a nuclear attack from Guam.

Since the Korean War, the belief that nuclear threats ended the war in Korea—like the belief that the United States bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki to reduce the loss of life—has become ingrained in American strategic culture and widely accepted by successive presidents and advisers. President Richard Nixon, for example, told an audience in 1969 that:

I’ll tell you how the war in Korea was ended. We got in there and had this war on our hands. Eisenhower let the word go out . . . to the Chinese and the North Koreans that we would not tolerate this continual ground war of attrition. And within a matter of months, they negotiated.⁶²

As we shall see, this historical lesson still guides U.S. nuclear strategy in Korea nearly four decades later.

2

Mutual Vulnerability

Before we use them we had better look to our air defenses. Right now we present ideal targets for atomic weapons in Pusan and Inchon.

— U.S. Army Chief of Staff
Gen. J. Lawton Collins, March 27, 1953¹

In 1950, the American strategic community had not settled on a coherent conceptual framework to guide and legitimate the use of its burgeoning nuclear forces. Ideas about nuclear warfighting, nuclear compellence, and nuclear deterrence coexisted uneasily, jostling for attention. The first historical lesson from World War II proved inadequate to meet the challenges posed by the Korean War. The Korean War generated a second lesson that largely superseded the first lesson learned in the earlier war.

Although the United States never escalated to nuclear attack in Korea, Americans concluded from Korea that modern limited wars were also nuclear wars. As Rand Corporation analyst Herbert Goldhamer told the U.S. Air Force in 1952,

The United Nations Command has not used the A-bomb in Korea. Nonetheless this weapon has played a positive role in the Korean war. Its existence and possible use affected both communist troops and their military and political commanders.”²

Obviously, nuclear weapons had not deterred North Korean Communists from attacking South Korean positions. As U.S. policymakers viewed North Korea as a satellite of the Soviet Union, they inferred that the Soviet Union had not been deterred either. As Acheson put it, “The profound lesson of Korea is that, contrary to every action preceding, the USSR took a step which risked—however remotely—general war.”³

On the face of it, therefore, the war contradicted the first historical lesson: that the existence of nuclear weapons precluded aggression against nuclear-armed powers—at least when the United States relaxed its commitment, as conservatives argued Dean Acheson had done in Korea.

Other U.S. strategists, however, took a slightly different tack. Not only was limited war possible, but the lesson of Korea was that henceforth such wars would be fought with the nuclear threat hanging over the adversaries. Wrote Paul Nitze, author of NSC 68, three years after the war,

Whether or not atomic weapons are ever again used in warfare, the very fact of their existence, the possibility that they could be used, will affect all future wars. In this sense Korea was an atomic war even though no atomic weapons were used. In this sense even the cold war is an atomic cold war. The situation is analogous to a game of chess. The atomic queens may never be brought into play; they may never actually take one of the opponent's pieces. But the position of the atomic queens may still have a decisive bearing on which side can safely advance a limited-war bishop or even a cold-war pawn. The advance of a cold-war pawn may even disclose a check of the opponent's king by a well-positioned atomic queen.⁴

As we have seen, both Truman and Eisenhower tried their hand at nuclear chess in Korea. But nuclear weapons were not used to knock out pawns, queens, or kings in the Korean War. Nor, as is argued above, did nuclear threats *compel* Communist leaders to accept a checkmate of the war. In fact, nuclear threats made in the course of the war radically transformed the conceptual basis of the first historical lesson that assumed a U.S. nuclear monopoly. Evaluating their Korean adversaries' vulnerability to nuclear attack inevitably led the U.S. military to ask the same question in reverse. It did not take them long to conclude that their own vulnerability virtually negated the first lesson and ensured that future compellence or deterrence would be obtained by nuclear threats rather than warfighting.

The same recognition sowed fear and ambivalence about U.S. nuclear strategy among nuclear allies. Consequently, the United States was obliged to elevate reassuring its allies to an equal footing with deterring or compelling its enemies—the subject of the final section of this chapter.

Problem of Defense

The leaders of the militant containment policy current soon learned in Korea that they could not play chess by nuclear warfighting, only by threats. When the war broke out in June 1950, however, they still had no coherent ideology to guide strategy based on threats, whether for deterrence, compellence, or reassurance.

In the midst of the war, U.S. strategists working for interests feeding the contending policy currents undertook studies of nuclear war in Korea.

Some of these analyses contained the essential ingredients that became the ideology known as mutual nuclear deterrence. The policy current committed to militant containment in Korea favored the use of nuclear threats to compel U.S. adversaries in that war. This current finally triumphed over the rollback current that favored warfighting for victory over North Korea and China. The explosion of the Soviets' H-bomb in 1954 then forced the militant containment current to revise its goal yet again from compellence to deterrence, based on nuclear threat rather than warfighting.

The war forced U.S. strategists to recognize the important conceptual distinction between the military and psychological aspects of nuclear war—a difference exemplified in the contrast between the army's Johns Hopkins report and air force's Rand report described previously. This lesson had great import for the conduct of U.S. alliances. In Korea, U.S. political leaders discovered that they could not ignore the allied reaction to U.S. nuclear threats, even if only to discount them.

The emergence of a coherent U.S. nuclear ideology, however, required that Americans first comprehend that they too were vulnerable to adversarial nuclear forces. That fundamental lesson was learned in the Korean War. Thereafter, undeniable doubts gnawed at the psyches of American nuclear commanders. By 1951 it was apparent that the Soviet nuclear explosion in 1949 had already cut short the era of U.S. nuclear omnipotence. In Korea it slowly dawned in the U.S. military's collective mind that they had to worry about nuclear attack.

"In the problem of defense," advised the March 1951 Johns Hopkins report to General MacArthur, "there is the question as to whether one's own forces and installations are so disposed as to be vulnerable and, if so, what more suitable dispositions and defenses are possible."⁵

To answer this question, the report analyzed whether UN Command field troops, army and air force headquarters at Taegu, and UN airfields would have been lucrative nuclear targets as the situation stood on December 31, 1950; and whether Pusan, the logistical port through which poured 80 percent of the supplies to fight the war, was vulnerable on October 16, 1950.⁶ The dates selected were critical junctures in the war for which the researchers had detailed intelligence reports.

They showed that each of these targets was indeed vulnerable. Each target was sufficiently valuable to justify using nuclear weapons; each target could be identified; and none of them could assuredly stop a nuclear attack.⁷

Sixteen nuclear airbursts, for example, would have wiped out 43–48 percent of the entire UN two-corps front in an arc 25–30 miles north of Seoul, permitting communist forces to break through the left flank of the Eighth U.S. Army.⁸ A 40-kiloton nuclear airburst above the Taegu headquarters, they calculated, would have destroyed the nerve centers and

communications hubs for central command of the entire UN ground and air forces in Korea on the day before a major Communist offensive began.⁹ Similarly, a surprise nuclear attack on Pusan on October 16, 1950, would have destroyed an enormous fleet and accompanying war materiel that "might have effected a decisive result in [the Communist] campaign against the UN forces."¹⁰

In short, UN Command was utterly vulnerable to nuclear preemption and, by implication, to nuclear retaliation:

UN tactics in Korea have been such as to present many targets physically and militarily exploitable by atomic bombs. Such targets have existed among ground forces; division, corps, army, and air force headquarters; airfields; logistical bases; ports; and naval fleets.¹¹

These conclusions were reiterated on December 4, 1951, in a secret military report that stated that American troops in Korea were "exceedingly vulnerable to atomic attack."¹²

UN Command did not incorporate these lessons into its immediate tactics. The urgency of fighting the ground war and the inertia of ingrained military practices precluded any reorganization of staff lines or adoption of nuclear defenses through increased dispersion and mobility. The army was more interested in keeping its foot in the nuclear door to stop the air force from gaining budgetary dominance than it was in developing a realistic warfighting capability with nuclear weapons.¹³ Moreover, the political command in Washington believed that it was highly unlikely that the Soviet Union would enter the war short of outright attack on its own forces and territory.¹⁴

From Nuclear Chess . . .

Yet by late 1951 the fact that U.S. forces were vulnerable to nuclear attack had entered the tactical calculus of field commanders. As fighting raged along the military demarcation line during the protracted cease-fire talks, UN Command explored its military options.

This move was a definitive rejection of the rollback option and an embrace of the violent status quo represented by the military demarcation line. General Matthew Ridgway had been ordered on May 1, 1951, to abandon any plans to fight north of the Kansas line. On May 22, 1951, the U.S. Joint Chiefs ordered him to inflict maximum damage on Communist forces while minimizing American casualties.¹⁵ This objective was best

achieved, he felt, by a gradual advance using withering firepower along the whole line. On May 28, he had rejected naval proposals for an amphibious flanking action on the east coast not far south of Wonsan on the grounds that this move might dramatically increase casualties.¹⁶

In September, Ridgway told the U.S. Joint Chiefs that if the talks collapsed then he could launch an amphibious assault at Wonsan coordinated with an advance from the Kansas battleline (which passed through the Hwach'on Reservoir). But this strategy, he advised, might provoke Soviet intervention and would provide an ideal target for an atomic bomb.¹⁷

Alternatively, this risk could be avoided by a less vulnerable landing near Tongchon coupled with an advance north from Imjin river. Ridgway estimated that this move would still increase UN casualties to ten thousand per month. On November 3, 1951, the U.S. Joint Chiefs considered the issue. In light of the unpalatable risks, they abandoned idea of advancing to the neck of Korea.¹⁸

... To Russian Roulette

By September, therefore, Ridgway had recognized nuclear risk as reason to not launch a new flank. The battle to straighten the line waged by the UN allies in August–September 1951 cost sixty thousand UN casualties, twenty thousand of whom were Americans. At home, pressure was mounting to end the war. September 1951 was not an opportune time to present too tempting a target for Soviet nuclear attack. Ridgway, unlike his political commanders, had realized that he was playing Russian nuclear roulette rather than American nuclear chess. Henceforth, nuclear deterrence in wartime would be a two-way street.

Ridgway's calculation is the earliest nuclear example in wartime of what the military call a "virtual effect"—that is, an adjustment of battlefield tactics due to the mere existence of an adversarial force, in this case, the Soviets' nuclear capability. Henceforth, the superpowers would steer clear of overlapping interventions in which their combat forces might collide.

The U.S. military were unable to internalize completely the implications of this lesson. They continued to plan nuclear attacks to terminate the Korean War. After the Armistice, Far East Command created a regional infrastructure for nuclear warfighting. Nuclear weapons were forward deployed in the 1950s as conventional forces. Today, U.S. Forces Korea still ignores this lesson by keeping open the option of U.S. first use of nuclear weapons on the doorstep of the Soviet Union.¹⁹

Victory of Militant Containment

In 1950 MacArthur's call to "roll back" Communism above the 38th Parallel and aim for "total victory" unified conservative forces opposed to almost twenty years of Democratic control of foreign policy—the old isolationists and Asia-Firsters, an alliance that Arthur Schlesinger called the "Asialationists." Their main aims were reduction of military commitments to Europe, the use of unilateral military action unrestrained by allies, and a focus on Asia as the principal field of U.S. expansion. MacArthur stirred these passions in 1952: "The communist conspirators," he wrote, "have elected to make their play for global conquest in Asia—here we fight Europe's war with arms while the diplomats there still fight with words."²⁰

Once MacArthur was vanquished, the rollbackers had no further hope of blasting invasion corridors into China with nuclear weapons. Their nemesis, the containment liberals, used the war to reorder the global political order in accordance with a very different vision. The War allowed them to rearm Germany and Japan, to commit a huge permanent garrison of troops in Europe, and impose an American-led integrated military command onto the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Moreover, it permitted them to reverse demobilization, triple defense spending, and to create a global military machine. In just two years, 1950–1952, annual U.S. military expenditures increased fourfold, from \$13 billion to \$50 billion. Simultaneously, personnel in the armed forces doubled to almost 3 million, naval ships increased from 671 to over 1,100, and air force wings rose from 48 to 108.²¹

The Korean War established a long-standing pattern. Nuclear threats had entered the U.S. arsenal of coercive diplomacy and could be used to deter or compel behavior by adversaries. But General MacArthur's dismissal established a tacit understanding between the United States and its allies: nuclear weapons could be used to contain Communism by threats, but they could not be used to "roll back" socialist states by nuclear attack.

Admittedly, on at least three occasions, the United States almost reneged on this pact by nearly massively retaliating: in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu, in 1955 in the first Taiwan Straits crisis, and in 1958, in the second Taiwan Straits crisis.²² Although it is little known, the United States may have come closer actually to using nuclear weapons in this crisis than in the Cuban missile crisis four years later.²³ Remnants of massive retaliation doctrine fed powerful undercurrents of rollback into the mainstream ideology of militant containment that predominated in Washington until 1980, at which time the rollbackers vaulted back into the saddle of power.

Nonetheless, the basic elements of nuclear ideology had been forged for the first time in the crucible of Korea. It would take another decade before they were assembled into a coherent intellectual system. Meanwhile, strategists investigated the impact of nuclear threats on the outcome of the war and how such effects might be exploited in future hot or cold wars.

Psychological Warfare

Hitherto unrevealed evidence shows that the U.S. military examined closely the psychological impacts of nuclear threats on their Communist adversaries in Korea. In May 1951 the Rand Corporation's Herbert Goldhamer conducted an investigation of the effects on Communist troops and their political and military commanders of the U.S. possession of nuclear weapons. The study relied on the transcripts of sixty-five Chinese Communist and forty-seven North Korean Army prisoners of war who were interrogated at Pusan in May 1951.²⁴ The secret study, completed in August 1952, revealed that both Chinese and North Korean troops were genuinely fearful that the United States might use nuclear weapons and of the consequences should it be used.²⁵

"Concern," states the report, "tended to become especially acute following UN retreats or communist successes because of the belief that the UN might be forced in desperation into using the A-bomb." Rumors that the United States was about to launch nuclear attacks swept through Communist ranks on three occasions by mid-1951: at the entry of Chinese troops into the war, at the UN retreat in December 1950, and at the UN evacuation of civilians from north Korea.²⁶

The fear was so deep that Communist commanders were forced to run vigorous indoctrination campaigns to counter the effects on troop morale. The report noted that Chinese and North Korean propaganda strategies differed:

NKA [the North Korean Army] indoctrination appeals primarily, and much more largely than does CCF [Chinese Communist Forces] indoctrination, to the might of the Soviet Union, as a safeguard against U.S. use of the A-bomb. NKA indoctrination avoids statements depreciatory [*sic*] of the power of the A-bomb, whereas CCF propaganda emphasizes the limitations of the A-bomb. Both CCF and NKA indoctrination emphasize the existence of an international agreement not to use the A-bomb . . . In summary, then, the general intent of NKA indoctrination was to convince the troops that the A-bomb could not be used by the United States, whereas CCF propaganda argued that the U.S. would not use the A-bomb, but if it did, it was not powerful enough to decide the war.²⁷

This divergence stemmed from the different images of the bomb adhered to by the Chinese and North Korean troops and from the greater Soviet influence over North Korean military doctrine and practice.²⁸ Both parties told their troops that a (nonexistent) agreement existed outlawing the use of nuclear weapons. Of course, this line contradicted another tenet of Communist propaganda, namely, that the United States was an immoral imperialist power—hardly an image of a state that would have agreed to no first use.²⁹

In spite of the propaganda effort, about half the troops interviewed still believed that the bomb might be used, demonstrating to the Rand analyst that the nuclear threat was relatively impervious to indoctrination. According to the report, “Communist troops were quick to note the internal contradictions in communist A-bomb indoctrination and contradictions between this indoctrination and certain well-established convictions that they had ([for example] that Japan surrendered because of the A-bomb attacks).”³⁰ Moreover, those troops who concluded that the United States would not escalate did so by arguments contrary to Communist beliefs, namely, that the United States had too great a regard for human life and did not want to kill Chinese and Koreans, along with the tactical difficulties of using nuclear weapons on the battlefield. That more than half still believed that the United States would or might use nuclear weapons showed that the indoctrination could not easily counter the nuclear threat. Troops may also have gained reassurance from the fact that the United States did not use nuclear weapons at critical moments such as Chinese intervention and the UN retreat.³¹

The report noted that nuclear weapons reaped what might be termed “bonus fear.” It found that both Chinese and North Korean troops imputed greater destructive power and radius to nuclear weapons “in excess of its actual power.”³² Troops believed that nuclear weapons could destroy not only humans and property, but nature itself. Said one, “Mountains are melted.” Said another, “Farming becomes impossible.” Said a third, “All living things are exterminated.”³³

Nuclear fear was acute when troops set out from China to cross into North Korea. Even high-ranking officers reportedly feared the bomb, not just as a disturbance to troop morale, but for military consequences.³⁴ The bulk of the Chinese troops stated that they had been lectured on nuclear war at least three times—which was more intensive than North Korean indoctrination.

North Korean indoctrination appealed primarily (and much more than the Chinese) to Soviet deterrence against U.S. nuclear escalation. Political officers often relied on the purported ability of the Soviet Union to retaliate with socialist nuclear weapons to counter the U.S. nuclear threat.³⁵ But many soldiers were not reassured by putative Soviet extended deterrence.

“The men,” reported one prisoner, “did not talk much about A-bombs but also they did not believe the officers. Soldiers said among themselves when there were no officers around: how is it that a great industrial country like the United States has so few while the S.U. [Soviet Union] is said to have so many.”³⁶

The indoctrination sessions reportedly began in September–October 1950—that is, well before Truman’s widely publicized November 30, 1951, press conference in which he mentioned the nuclear weapons. None of the prisoners were aware of nuclear threat statements made by American leaders. However, the Rand report speculates that civilians may have monitored radio reports of Truman’s statements and the subsequent furor, feeding troop alarm.³⁷ Indeed, one prisoner reported that troops had to be used to calm civilians:

When I was in North Korea, we discussed the A-bomb at workers’ meetings which were also attended by officers and soldiers. The civilians were greatly afraid of the A-bomb. Common privates made efforts to propagandize them about A-bombs.³⁸

Once at the front, troops seemed to be less susceptible to nuclear threat. This belief was partly grounded in correct perceptions that it was difficult for the United States to deliver nuclear strikes without hitting UN troops.³⁹ Said one prisoner,

We feared it very much but thought that the United States would not use it. When we were in the rear close to civilians, we thought that the United States did not want to kill civilians, and when we were in the front line, we thought that the United States could not use the A-bomb because of the closeness of their own troops.⁴⁰

That is, the more powerful the troops perceived the physical effects of nuclear weapons, the less credible became U.S. threats to use them on the battlefield. Even with “primitive” knowledge of nuclear weapons, many ordinary Communist troops were able to apprehend correctly the nuclear paradox facing U.S. commanders. Not all the indoctrination was fabricated. Apart from a couple of incorrect assertions about the state of American public opinion on using the bomb in Korea and his irrelevant reference to German science and capitalists using the Bomb, this political officer had a fairly accurate grasp of the factors constraining U.S. nuclear attack:

The political officer said the secret of the A-bomb is now known to the world. The Soviet Union already uses it for industries. The U.S. took it from German studies and completed it. Though the U.S. may intend to

use the bomb in Korea, they cannot easily use it because most Americans are opposed to it and few capitalists intend to use it. There are no carriers to bring it to Korea. The country which uses the A-bomb first will become a war criminal.⁴¹

Frontline traumas, however, could reactivate anxiety about nuclear attack. Reported one prisoner, "After we were attacked with fragmentation bombs, the soldiers talked a lot about A-bombs. They said, 'If fragmentation bombs are so dreadful, how much more so is the A-bomb?'"⁴²

Like all soldiers, troops submerged their fears in black humor. When the war was unbearable, cynics would say that they wished nuclear attack would end their misery.⁴³ One prisoner reported the jocular reaction to the prospect of nuclear war: "After hearing the chief political officer of the company talk about the A-bomb," he said, "the men joked with each other about it. They joked, saying, 'Now we can go live in the sea.'"⁴⁴

Cold War

The report concluded that "the psychological and political warfare uses of the A-bomb have not been systematically exploited nor does there appear to exist a body of doctrine on this matter."⁴⁵ To rectify this deficiency, it recommended that the United States take six steps, each of which became an integral part of the nuclear ideology of massive retaliation declared in 1954.⁴⁶

First, it found that the psychological and political warfare potential of atomic weapons was applicable to Asians as well as Westerners.

Asiatic troops and peoples are just as (and possibly more) susceptible to terrorization by the threat of A-bomb attack as the soldiers and peoples of western, urbanized countries. Any assumption that Asiatics are too ignorant of the significance of the A-bomb to be frightened by it or that because of their rural-agricultural pursuits they consider themselves immune from attack is contradicted by the Korean materials.⁴⁷

With hindsight, it seems incredible that any analyst aware of the impact of the bomb on the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki could have believed otherwise. In 1951, however, many Americans doubted the humanity of Asians. In the Johns Hopkins report to General MacArthur for example, one author wrote, that "Given the general disregard of death among Asiatics compared with Americans, it [nuclear attack] might come to be accepted as a normal hazard of war."⁴⁸ The Rand report implicitly criti-

cized this racism by advising that nuclear threats would work well against Asians.

Next, Rand advised that “adequate” psychological warfare to tap this potential must cultivate many subsidiary beliefs and attitudes (for example, the technological prowess or humanitarian motives of the United States). As a result, it further recommended that the United States must wage cold war before hot war—a virtual blueprint for the next decade: “It is probably a safe rule for psychological and political warfare that when possible its campaigns should be waged and its objectives achieved well before their full benefits are to be reaped or are required.”⁴⁹ Propaganda, it implied, would be central if the United States was to reap the harvest of psychological power inherent in nuclear weapons. In effect, it was suggesting that a continuous nuclear threat backed up with an image of an omnipotent, omnipresent, and beneficent United States was necessary to exploit the power potential of nuclear threats.

Relatedly, the report noted that the United States had missed an opportunity up to then to counter Communist indoctrination against the U.S. nuclear threat. It suggested, for example, that the United States should take the simple step of informing frontline Communist troops that nuclear weapons had *not* been outlawed by the international community. Thereby, Communist psychological defenses would be undermined by reviving military and civilian fears and reducing confidence in Communist leadership without the United States having to threaten escalation explicitly.⁵⁰ This tactic, he added, would be particularly effective in Korea where Communist troops were easily accessible to propaganda counterattacks.⁵¹

Fifth, it argued that exploiting nuclear weapons in the future entails taking “special note of a widespread belief that the A-bomb cannot be used tactically.” The U.S. military did not take long to implement this lesson in Operation Big Stick and nuclear artillery exercises in 1953. Achieving psychological advantage by projecting an image of warfighting capability has remained a constant theme of U.S. nuclear doctrine ever since.

The Rand report was not suggesting striving for mere tactical military advantage. Nuclear threats could obtain strategic political gains as well: “The A-bomb, although its value in this respect has been little exploited, constitutes one of the primary threats to peoples and armies whose governments engage in aggressive actions and to those governments themselves.”⁵² Communist states, it suggested, rule by establishing in minds of their troops and civilians their invulnerability to Western power. “It is equally important to the United States,” argues the report, “to establish quite the opposite view.”⁵³ That is, by attacking the legitimacy of Communist states, nuclear psychological warfare could serve as a prime instrument of rollback, not just as a tool of political and military containment.

This lesson has been implemented against North Korea ever since 1950. Its impact explains a great deal about contemporary North Korean threat perceptions (chapter 8). Ironically, American strategists have forgotten that the offensive political logic of rollback underlay nuclear threats in Korea during the Korean War. As important, they also ignore that North Koreans may recall this motivation when they evaluate nuclear threats today.

American Unilateralism

The substitution of nuclear threat for warfighting in the pursuit of compellence in Korea embroiled the United States in confrontations with its allies in arms in Korea. The corollary of the second historical lesson, therefore, was that hereafter the allies would have to be cajoled and reassured in the course of implementing nuclear strategy.

But during the Korean War, the United States called all the shots even in lesser matters of field tactics. Admittedly, American diplomats pushed for consultations with allies before moves were made, but often the military simply ignored the State Department and the allies' concerns. In June 1953, for example, the United States failed to consult its allies before bombing the Yalu hydro plants, ignoring an earlier agreement to consult with the British before it hit this target. Both the United Kingdom and Canada thought that this omission was intentional and not, as Acheson assured them, an oversight.⁵⁴

The military were determined to keep a free hand so long as the United States provided most of the ground forces. The State Department's only comeback was the need to have allied support should the war escalate to global confrontation—in which case the allies would need the United States anyway.⁵⁵ Washington's only major tactical concession to the allies in the whole war was retraction of MacArthur's order to allow hot pursuit of Communist MiGs into Chinese airspace.⁵⁶

Nuclear threats were even less likely than conventional tactics to be subject to allied review. Far from securing U.S. political-military hegemony, nuclear threats in the Korean War alarmed and alienated U.S. allies that had joined the UN intervention. Consultation about nuclear warfighting alarmed rather than reassured allies such as the United Kingdom. Nor was the United States about to give the allies a free ride by giving them false impressions as to U.S. intentions. U.K. prime minister Winston Churchill, for example, asked General Omar Bradley on January 6, 1952, if the United States was considering using nuclear weapons in the Korean War. Bradley explained "that it was not our intention to use these bombs, *since*

up to the present no suitable targets were presented.”⁵⁷ The British Joint Chiefs informed the Cabinet on June 28, 1952 that

it might be suggested by the Americans that in the event of their participation being insufficient to restore the situation in Korea, an atom bomb should be dropped in North Korea. If the proposal should be made, ministers would wish to know the views of the Chiefs of Staff. There was general agreement from the military point of view that the dropping of an atomic bomb in North Korea would be unsound. The effects of such action would be worldwide, and might well be very damaging. Moreover it would probably provoke a global war.⁵⁸

The British military could see no suitable objective for nuclear attack in Korea and preferred to rely on conventional strategic bombing to pound the North Koreans and the Chinese to the negotiating table. “This weapon,” they cabled to the British embassy in Washington on July 20, 1952, “must in our view be kept in reserve for use in the proper place in the event of a major war with Russia.”⁵⁹

Allied Dissent

Whenever the United States publicly threatened nuclear escalation, a chorus of allied dissent descended on Washington through diplomatic channels and media reports of popular protests. But early in the war, the United States had made it clear that the decision to use nuclear weapons remained wholly American. When Truman inadvertently awarded the right of prior consultation (not even veto) on use of nuclear weapons to the United Kingdom in the draft communiqué of his December 1950 summit with U.K. prime minister Attlee, the U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson quickly expunged this agreement from the summit record.⁶⁰ At about the same time, Acheson noted that he would have to move “in step” with the British if the bomb were used, but that he refused to allow them to “restrict his freedom of action.”⁶¹

Moreover, there is no evidence that Attlee’s visit to Washington blocked a wider war with China in December 1950. The war was kept limited by the revitalization of U.S. forces on the front line under General Ridgway and not by allied diplomacy.⁶² Eisenhower recognized that escalating to nuclear attack would cause a rift in the Western alliance, but he was also confident that he could repair that damage.⁶³

In this view, he was undoubtedly correct. Allied security elites felt that they could not endanger their own alliance relationships with the United States by squabbling publicly over strategy in Korea. Australia, for exam-

ple, believed it would have to back the United States if it unilaterally widened the war all the way to global war.⁶⁴ As this eventuality never came to pass, it cannot be determined whether if the allies would have stayed the American nuclear trigger finger in the Korean War.

The available evidence, however, suggests that the United States would have overridden the allies if it had been provoked by China. U.S. nonuse cannot be said to have been a concession made by a nuclear power to obtain allied support for its overall strategy in the war. At this stage of its development, therefore, the nuclear alliance system was not fully hegemonic.

U.S. nuclear forces, therefore, did not serve a hegemonic function in the Korean War. The United States neither sought nor received support from its allies in arms in Korea for its nuclear posture—whether for warfighting, compellance, or deterrence. Indeed, as the United States had not developed a nuclear doctrine with which to persuade its allies of the necessity and effectiveness of nuclear forces, it was impossible to obtain allied support for its evolving nuclear strategy in Korea. The ideological rubric of the time—anti-Communism—was insufficient for this task. Anti-Communism had not yet fused with nuclear threat to generate the ideology of massive retaliation, which later mutated into assured destruction and flexible response.

There was, therefore, no alliance ideology to legitimate the use of U.S. nuclear forces in the Korean War. In the next decade, massive retaliation was to prove a poor substitute for coherent nuclear ideology to link the rapidly developing nuclear forces in the Far East with the institutional integration represented by the new alliance system. Eventually, the United States would have to incorporate allied concerns into nuclear ideology to obtain their political support for even limited uses of this weapon, let alone for nuclear warfighting.

3

Massive Retaliation

The Golden Rule: He who has the gold gets the rule
— U.S. Army saying¹

War had no sooner ended in Korea than John Foster Dulles articulated the doctrine known as massive retaliation.² Dulles's doctrine spliced the two lessons into a single strategic paradox. Massive retaliation combined preparations for nuclear warfighting—after Korea, an increasingly implausible notion—with threats of nuclear attack. The only way to make this bluff credible was to make the realization of the threat inevitable. Thus, Dulles claimed that the United States would escalate immediately and massively by using nuclear weapons against adversaries. U.S. naval and air forces were stripped of conventional weapons and were loaded with nuclear weapons. In short, he surrounded the Sino-Soviet bloc with spring loaded, nuclear-armed mouse traps.

Whereas pre-Korean War nuclear strategy rested on the U.S. nuclear *monopoly*, the foundation of the new doctrine was the *superiority* of U.S. nuclear forces over those of the Soviet Union. Under the banner of massive retaliation, the services developed new generations of nuclear weapons, although many of these devices were not deployed until the doctrine was already passé.

This chapter shows how the United States tried to contain and to resolve the contradictions entailed by the new doctrine and changing circumstances over the next fifteen years. Massive retaliation, for example, mutated into mutual assured destruction as the Soviets relentlessly ground down U.S. strategic nuclear superiority after the Cuban missile crisis.

Throughout this period, reassurance of allies often loomed larger than enemy threats in U.S. nuclear diplomacy. The chapter demonstrates that the imperative drove further adjustments to doctrine and force structure, especially in Japan. It spawned flexible response, the doctrine that nuclear war could be fought in Europe without escalating to all-out superpower war. A bewildering array of tactical and theater nuclear forces matched the doctrinal shift, lending teeth to the new warfighting rhetoric. The chapter describes how the European allies wrested the right to be consulted on nuclear strategy affecting their interests. This concession was the

key to legitimating U.S. nuclear strategy in Europe, although the allies never obtained a veto over U.S. use of nuclear weapons in Europe.

In contrast to the European allies who wanted the United States to deploy ground-based nuclear weapons to couple their fate to the U.S. strategic arsenal, the chapter shows how the same issue nearly destroyed the Japanese government between 1955 and 1960. In Japan, the United States had to *remove* ground-based nuclear weapons to sustain the alliance. Accommodating its Japanese ally led the United States to adopt the neither-confirm-nor-deny policy, making it the Asian equivalent of flexible response. Both doctrines were designed to meet allied concerns, only the concerns and the palliatives were opposite in Europe to those in Japan.

The chapter also recounts how the navy and the air force carried the onus of strategic nuclear deterrence and compellence in Asia under the massive retaliation philosophy. In August–September 1958, for example, the Pacific Fleet and the Pacific Air Force clamored to drop nuclear bombs on China in the Taiwan Straits crisis—an attempt at compellence that only strengthened China’s political strategy to block diplomatic recognition of Taiwan by U.S. allies.³ Eisenhower nearly boxed himself into a corner out of which he could have fought his way only by using nuclear weapons.

The Kennedy administration downgraded the nuclear mission in 1960 and gave top priority to counterinsurgency and special warfare. The nuclear mission, however, was revived by the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962 and the Chinese nuclear explosion in 1964. The chapter describes how the services responded by deploying yet another generation of strategic nuclear weapons in the Pacific in the mid-1960s.

The chapter discloses entirely new information on the army’s introduction of nuclear weapons into Korea. It reveals how the army had become entrenched in a virtual nuclear domain in the 1960s. It also analyzes two important compellence contingencies that erupted in 1968 and 1969 when North Korea seized an American spyship, followed by a spyplane. As with U.S. efforts in 1969 to use nuclear threats against Moscow and Hanoi,⁴ both attempts failed to coerce North Korea.

Meanwhile, the army piled up an enormous stockpile of nuclear weapons in Korea. Planning for hundreds, even thousands, of nuclear explosions, the army converted Korea from a military theater to a theater of the absurd.

“Never Again”

The Korean War proved that limited wars were possible in the nuclear era. Before the war, as U.S. commander in Korea Gen. Matthew Ridgway

later put it, "The concept of 'limited warfare' never entered our councils."⁵

Moreover, the Korean War showed that no matter where they broke out, such wars challenged U.S. interests. Although Korea was the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time for many American conservatives, the militant containment policy current concluded that the United States had defended its prestige and reputation in Korea. And to them, it appeared that nuclear threats had played an important role in preserving U.S. interests in Korea—a perception that justified the emphasis placed on nuclear forces under the rubric of massive retaliation to the detriment of conventional forces. Massive retaliation therefore fused two contradictory notions: that the means of total warfare could be used in limited wars.

The military, however, remained divided over how to fight such wars. Many felt that the United States should never again engage in a meat-grinding ground war on the Asian mainland. The "never again" school emphasized an offshore strategy based on island forward bases and naval forces, and the substitution of nuclear weapons for manpower in ground wars. Citing "never again," the navy expanded its nuclear-capable carrier fleet. The army produced new nuclear forces for coalition warfare in Europe. And the air force's tactical fighter-bomber faction created a tactical nuclear bombing mission distinct from strategic nuclear bombing.⁶

Nuclear Alliances

Implementing massive retaliation also led the United States into confrontations with its allies. The substitution of nuclear threats for war-fighting in pursuit of compellence in Korea had already embroiled the United States in controversy with its own allies in arms. Consequently, the United States was obliged to cajole and reassure its allies to support massive retaliation.

The Korean War had inspired and enabled John Foster Dulles, the U.S. Secretary of State, to jury-rig a system of bilateral alliances in the Pacific. By 1954 six interlocking alliances radiated out from Hawaii to Japan, Okinawa, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, and Pakistan. At this early stage, the regional alliances were more like an U.S.-controlled nuclear protectorate than a full-fledged, U.S.-led hegemonic security system.

The immediate purpose of the alliance system was to buttress the United States' coalition strategy for fighting the Korean War. But Dulles also had a larger goal in mind: the implementation of massive retaliation.⁷ Thus, the Pacific alliances rested on nuclear weapons from their inception. The U.S.–South Korean alliance was no exception.

UN Nuclear Weapons in Korea

The armistice that ended the war in Korea also banned the introduction of new weapons into Korea. It established the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission to monitor and verify these provisions. For some years, the commission attempted to inspect actual arms shipments in North and South Korea. As in the war itself, as yet no nuclear weapons were deployed in Korea.⁸ The possibility of commission inspections meant that it was unlikely that the United States would introduce nuclear weapons. The topic, however, remained under active study. In 1956, for example, the Operations Research Office at Johns Hopkins University presented the Pentagon with a classified analysis of the weapons required to create an "atomic barrier" in Korea.⁹

By 1958 the commission was virtually defunct and the arms control provisions of the armistice had effectively lapsed.¹⁰ This collapse opened the way for the United States to introduce nuclear weapons in Korea.

Nuclear deployments in Korea by the army and the air force were undoubtedly facilitated by the local arms race that destroyed the arms control provisions of the armistice. Indeed the UN Command stated that the introduction of nuclear weapons was in accord with its announcement in June 1957 that imports of heavy weapons to the north had forced it to suspend observing the restrictions of paragraph 13d of the armistice.¹¹ But the advent of nuclear weapons was not in response to specific event in Korea, however. Rather, the deployments in Korea were part of a worldwide reorganization of army units into pentomic divisions, a move made to enhance the army's ability to attract congressional funds.¹²

Pentomic Army

Starting in 1956 the U.S. Army began to convert its forces from its traditional triangular division (that is, combat-maneuver, fire-base, and reserve elements) to a five-sided, "pentomic" nuclear warfighting design. The Army adopted the new division, composed of mobile battle groups backed by nuclear firepower, to maximize its chances of gaining funding approval for the new weapons.¹³ It had no idea how it would fight on a nuclear battlefield, as the internal studies consistently showed that victory could not be obtained under conditions of nuclear attack. Dispersal to avoid nuclear annihilation made it impossible to concentrate to exploit nuclear firepower, which left U.S. forces vulnerable to defeat in detail. If they concentrated to achieve local superiority, U.S. forces could themselves be attacked with nuclear weapons. Communications were incapable of

maintaining control, and intelligence systems were unable to identify targets quickly or at all.¹⁴

On January 28, 1958, the United Nations Command confirmed the arrival in South Korea of American 280-mm nuclear artillery and Honest John nuclear missiles.¹⁵ The typical pentomic division after 1956 had eighteen nuclear systems (twelve 155-mm howitzers; four 8-inch howitzers, Two Honest John missile launchers). The pentomic division artillery had one battalion of towed 105-mm howitzers and one “general support-composite” battalion containing Honest John, 8-inch, and 155-mm howitzer batteries. The initial idea—widely criticized within the army as totally unrealistic—was that the general support-composite battalion would provide immediate nuclear fires with Honest Johns. Later, this nuclear firepower was increased by providing nuclear projectiles for the artillery howitzers.¹⁶

Cruise Missiles

In 1958 the U.S. Air Force withdrew its combat units from South Korea and replaced them with rotational detachments. The initial withdrawal was motivated by American desires for a better overall posture. South Korean pressure, however, led to the retention of rotational elements. In 1959 the air force permanently stationed a squadron of nuclear-tipped Matador cruise missiles in Korea. Able to fly 1,100 kilometers, Matador was aimed as much against China and the Soviet Union as against North Korea.¹⁷ The 1,800 kilometer range Mace followed the Matador in South Korea in 1961, increasing the nuclear reach from Korea.¹⁸

Less is known about the rationale for air force nuclear weapons in Korea at this time. Like the army and the marines, however, the tactical air force underwent an acute identity crisis in the 1950s and sought to carve out a distinctive role in the nuclear realm.¹⁹ Massive retaliation also gave an immediate ideological rationale for the forces, wedding militant containment to early notions of nuclear compellence and deterrence. The tactical air force could not compete against Strategic Air Command for primacy in the anti-Soviet mission. It identified an alternative nuclear mission against lesser adversaries targeted by massive retaliation doctrine. The range of Matador and Mace is *prima facie* evidence that the air force used Korea as a platform from which to threaten China and the Soviet Union.

That the United Nations Command loudly trumpeted that the nuclear artillery and missiles had arrived—an interesting contrast with the coy neither-confirm-nor-deny policy adhered to today by UNC—reflected the

fact that the United States was in a much stronger political position in Seoul than it was in Tokyo, across the Tsushima-Korea straits. The repression of dissent in South Korea also made it unnecessary to articulate any public rationale for nuclear forces beyond crude anti-communism. The nuclear army and air force in Korea faced almost no opposition compared with Japan and Western Europe.

Japan Link

Events across the Korea-Tsushima straits were unfolding with great portent for U.S. nuclear strategy in Korea. At almost the same time that nuclear weapons arrived in Korea, they were evicted from Japan. This inverse relationship has been maintained ever since, informing nuclear strategy in Korea with a political logic that extends to other U.S. interests in the region.

In 1951 a bilateral U.S.-Japan security treaty gave the Pentagon virtual *carte blanche* in Japan. The treaty made no provisions for joint action or consultation on any matter—including the sensitive issue of U.S. nuclear deployments—and gave the Pentagon control over Okinawa and other islands. Seen as a “provisional arrangement,” the treaty also revived Japan’s defunct security forces and envisioned that they would “increasingly assume responsibility for . . . defense against direct and indirect aggression.”²⁰ The United States had introduced nuclear capable weapons into Japan, which served as its major logistics center for nuclear warfare in Asia in the mid-1950s. By 1957 warheads were stored at three U.S. bases and routinely shipped through nine U.S. bases in Japan (excluding Okinawa).²¹

The military alliance with the United States touched a deep and raw nerve among the Japanese people. Antimilitarist and antinuclear movements expanded throughout Japan in the 1950s. The protesters charged that the United States stored—or planned to store—nuclear weapons in Japan. Indeed, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles complained in 1954 of the Japanese “nuclear allergy,” a state of mind characterized in a U.S. State Department report as “a wave of hysteria.”²² In a 1957 poll in Japan, 87 percent of the respondents believed that nuclear weapons should be prohibited everywhere in the world.²³

In 1955 the conservative Liberal Democratic party government tested the waters of public opinion on the nuclear issue by announcing that it might not oppose U.S. nuclear stockpiles in Japan. The subsequent protests forced the government to retract this statement.²⁴ In June 1955 Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu assured the Diet that he had an “understanding” with U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Allison that U.S.

forces were not “in possession of nuclear weapons in Japan” and that “the US intended to seek Japanese consent to their introduction.” A 1957 U.S. State Department intelligence report, however, explained the meaning of Japan’s claim to an “understanding”:

This statement had its desired effect in cutting off Diet criticism of the government’s policy. However, there was in fact no such understanding. In a secret letter of July 7, 1955, the foreign minister was officially informed by the Embassy that the ambassador “made no commitments on May 31 regarding the storage of atomic weapons in Japan” and that “the US government does not consider itself committed to any particular course of action.” In reply, a letter from the foreign minister of July 13, 1955, gave assurances that “nothing in the discussions in the Diet commits the US Government to any particular course of action.”²⁵

Ampo Treaty Revision

In the late 1950s, the United States agreed to Japanese prime minister Nobosuke Kishi’s request that the 1951 Security Treaty be revised. Kishi wanted to reduce the political heat by changing the U.S. protectorate over Japan to a U.S.-Japan mutual defense treaty on a more equal footing. The United States would be committed to defend Japan, but Japan would avoid entanglement in U.S. regional security strategy. Most important, Kishi wanted U.S. agreement to “regular, formal consultations on the equipment and deployment of United States forces in Japan.”²⁶ Such an agreement would enhance Japanese power vis-à-vis the United States and would undermine the popular antimilitarist movement.

As the negotiations proceeded, the national debate over the U.S. nuclear arsenal deepened. In 1957 Kishi again claimed that the nonexistent “Allison-Shigemitsu agreement” assured Japan’s nuclear neutrality.²⁷ The United States joined in this public deception in 1957 when it announced that it did not intend to introduce nuclear weapons into Japan and would consult the Japanese government before making such a decision. The State Department’s 1957 intelligence report noted that the U.S. statement “substantially” validated the “erroneous impression” given by Shigemitsu.²⁸ Put bluntly, the United States lied to confirm Kishi’s lies about Shigemitsu’s lies.

In fact, as noted above, U.S. nuclear weapons were already in Japan.²⁹ Furthermore, CINCPAC Admiral Harry Felt was scrambling to ensure that “consultation” with Japan would remain only a facade, allowing the United States to retain maximum military flexibility. “Consultation,” Felt cabled to the Joint Chiefs in 1958, “should be construed only as U.S.

acceptance of a responsibility to consider policies, welfare, and security of Japan before undertaking operations supported by U.S. forces or bases in Japan."³⁰ Such considerations applied only to emergency deployments of nuclear weapons, thereby excluding weapons in naval transit.³¹ Felt argued in his cable that the "U.S. cannot accept any Japanese veto over U.S. operations . . . Jap [*sic*] leaders must recognize that U.S. bases in Japan for sole purpose of a static defense of Japan would be of limited value to U.S."³² Echoing CINCPAC, the Joint Chiefs underscored that "there must be no obligation, implied or explicit, to grant Japan a veto power over the employment of U.S. forces."³³

This semantic subterfuge arose from the fact that, as a State Department report put it, "public opinion is a controlling factor in the formulation of Japan's national policy toward nuclear weapons."³⁴ The State Department predicted that the pro-United States conservative government would fall if the public lie ever saw the light of day.³⁵ The Joint Chiefs concurred in 1958 that it was "altogether unrealistic to expect to obtain Japanese agreement for the introduction of nuclear components [that is, fissile materials] into Japan, although this remains highly desirable . . . It therefore remains advisable now to seek to maintain the status quo with respect to weapons in Japan."³⁶

In the end, the United States was not willing to agree to treaty language that bound it to seek prior Japanese approval for nuclear deployments in Japan. Instead, in an exchange of formal letters, the United States agreed to CINCPAC's "consultation" formula, which meant, in effect, that the United States would withdraw the nuclear weapons tacitly stored in Japan in exchange for transit rights.³⁷

Committed to the U.S. alliance, Kishi ramrodded the revised treaty known as Ampo through the Diet in 1960, despite massive street battles and an organized opposition that represented one-third of the Japanese population.³⁸ Even moderates turned against the treaty when Kishi used force to dislodge the parliamentary opposition. The scale of street protests forced President Eisenhower to cancel a planned visit in 1960. Humiliated, Kishi was forced to resign.³⁹

Although the revised treaty was ratified, the legitimacy of a nuclear alliance with the United States had been tested and found wanting in Japan, which was still tasting the bitter harvest from seeds sown by Little Boy and Fat Man over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan objected privately to its ports being used to support the U.S. Seventh Fleet operations during the Taiwan Straits crisis, as the official history reveals: "Japan wants no active part in OSI [Offshore Islands] crisis, and is concerned about U.S. Navy ships using her ports for damage repair."⁴⁰ U.S. reluctance to use nuclear weapons against China in the Taiwan Straits crisis reaffirmed the shift of the militant containment policy current from nuclear warfighting

to nuclear threat as the way to obtain compellence or deterrence. But neither practice could allay anxiety in Japan.⁴¹ Indeed, the United States had to shift nuclear bombers from Japan to Guam at this time to avoid alarming the Japanese government.

Unlike European elites, therefore, Japanese officials did not seek explicit U.S. commitments to defend Japan with nuclear weapons. That the United States was willing to suffer private distrust and to endure weak public approbation of its nuclear strategy in Japan reveals how indispensable forward bases in Japan were to U.S. nuclear forces. It also showed that the United States expected that it could overrule allied objections if necessary. Nonetheless, the fact that the United States still found it expedient to respond to Japanese concerns over war with China and revision of the Ampo shows how much U.S. power had already shrunk from the 1940s.

Thus, the Japanese elite successfully *avoided* consultations with its nuclear patron and broke the coupling to U.S. strategic forces signified by ground-based nuclear weapons in Japan. This action led to a distinctively Asian contribution to U.S. nuclear doctrine, the policy of “neither confirming nor denying” the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons. Thereafter, the policy was applied globally to American nuclear operations. The military must have found this innovation quite bizarre. They were adjusting to a weapon that could not be fired. But what use was a weapon that could not even be displayed?

Reassuring Japan had generated changes in operational doctrine, force disposition, and U.S.-Japan relations. These adjustments in Japan and developments in the NATO alliance contrasted starkly with unilateral U.S. nuclear dominance in Korea.

Strategic to Theater Nuclear Strategy

In 1954 the United States unilaterally introduced tactical nuclear weapons into Europe and the Pacific for the use of its own forces—just as it did in Korea four years later. Unlike Korea, however, the United States also struck agreements with NATO allies in 1958 that permitted them to share U.S. information on nuclear weapons and strategy (these agreements were known as programs of cooperation). The Pacific allies did not share this access. Nor, as far as is known, did any of them seek it at the time.

In effect, the deployments gave the United States control over NATO’s strategy via its control over the weapons on which it was based.⁴² U.S. nuclear hegemony in Europe therefore dates from this deployment of theater nuclear weapons rather than from the creation of NATO itself.

Formerly, NATO had been a conventionally armed alliance, *albeit* with a nuclear-armed patron state.

By the time the allies had adjusted to the transformation of NATO into a nuclear alliance, the United States was already revising nuclear doctrine. It sought to downplay the immediate nuclear escalation implied by massive retaliation. It also pressured the allies to upgrade their conventional forces. European elites, however, worried that taking up the "burden" would reduce the U.S. commitment and weaken putative nuclear deterrence. They also preferred to rely on cheap U.S. nuclear deterrence.

The doctrinal shift also signaled to the Europeans that Americans might not be willing to commit nuclear suicide on their behalf after all.⁴³ Not only would they have to pay more for conventional forces to buttress the modernized nuclear force; they would have to pay this price in return for a nuclear force the credibility of which was inversely related to the expansion of the Soviet's nuclear force. Worse still, the new doctrine implied that nuclear war could be fought and limited to Europe—which fueled popular opposition to the strategy.

Flexible Response

The United States adroitly sidestepped allied dissensions to this strategy, which became known as flexible response. First, it proposed to share nuclear weapons in a multilateral nuclear force, which would have coopted the independent British and French nuclear arsenals to NATO strategy. In 1962 it committed itself to defending NATO with nuclear weapons. The same year it agreed to consult with European allies over nuclear doctrine and deployments relating to theater nuclear weapons.

Of course, wartime consultation would be subject to the availability of time. Like the agreement with Japan in 1960, consultation within NATO did not constitute a host-nation veto over U.S. or NATO first use.⁴⁴ To allay the fears of allies shaken by the Cuban missile crisis, the United States allowed NATO allies in 1963 to post officers on the Strategic Air Command base at Omaha, Nebraska, to work on NATO-related nuclear targeting.⁴⁵

In 1965, however, the United States recognized that the real issue for the allies was not obtaining control over U.S. nuclear strategy or use—something that they could never hope to wrest from the U.S. Congress. Rather, the allies were concerned that the alliance not appear to its enemies to be divided by nuclear strategy, nor conducted on an unequal footing in the eyes of domestic populations. In short, they had a public relations problem.

Nuclear Planning Group

To solve this problem, U.S. defense secretary Robert McNamara created the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), the first truly hegemonic nuclear security institution.⁴⁶ The creation of the NPG shifted the focus of the nuclear debate within NATO. The allies began to talk about sharing policy and procedures rather than controlling nuclear weapons. The NPG repaired the rift between the United States and its NATO allies over nuclear strategy.

At the NPG, the Americans upgraded information given to NATO. Allies were no longer subjected to kindergarten briefings but instead joined substantive discussions of nuclear hardware and strategy relevant to nuclear war in Europe. In 1967 the United States also agreed to provide allies with annual inventory reports on nuclear weapons stored on their territory.⁴⁷

McNamara viewed the NPG as a vehicle whereby the allies could be brought to “understand” the U.S. perspective.⁴⁸ The cost of obtaining their consent to U.S. nuclear policy in Europe was the provision of greater access to nuclear intelligence. The United States was careful to maintain control over the NPG meetings of NATO allies. The U.S. secretary of defense chaired the NPG annual ministerial meetings. The NPG staff who conducted on-going studies and discussions were drawn largely from the nuclear offices of the U.S.-dominated Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe. As the United States supplied most of the classified information required for the NPG to have anything to discuss, it inevitably controlled the NPG’s agenda.

Meeting once a year, the NPG meetings did little to affect U.S. policy decisions. They did harmonize the allies ideologically over nuclear matters. The NPG also buffered the United States against allied criticisms, and left it free to proceed as it wished. In short, consultations at the NPG became a placebo making it easier for allied elites to swallow nuclear policies dished up by the United States.

The ideological shift implied by flexible response was intended to absorb the tension between extending nuclear deterrence to the allies under conditions of superpower nuclear parity. The new doctrine ostensibly raised the nuclear threshold by increasing conventional deterrence and defenses, and it beefed up nuclear deterrence by providing credible options for using theater nuclear weapons.⁴⁹ Flexible response, therefore, was the latest twist in the notion of “extended deterrence”—that is, the idea that nuclear deterrence could be extended to block threats against allies and to buttress conventional deterrence or substitute for conventional force.⁵⁰

In 1967 NATO formally adopted flexible response as a guide for

tactical nuclear war planning. This development forced the army to reconsider its uncritical conception of nuclear warfighting which simply grafted nuclear weapons onto its traditional maneuver/attrition strategy. NATO leaders assigned important political roles to battlefield and theater nuclear forces. They emphasized that using nuclear weapons should not lead to automatic escalation. In short, the allies were insisting that the force structure and strategy match U.S. rhetoric of nuclear deterrence. This was easier said, however, than done.

Deterrence was an alien and uncomfortable concept for the army, which still did not recognize that weapons could be used without being fired. It took the army until 1973 to shift decisively away from nuclear warfighting. That year, its operational doctrine acknowledged for the first time that nuclear weapons played a role in the phase prior to the outbreak of hostilities and that any use would be limited by political considerations.⁵¹ For West Germans especially, that meant that they should be able to play the Eastern and Western sides of the strategic street. Their *Ostpolitik* led to the Helsinki Agreements in 1971 that formally recognized the territorial divisions between states and blocs. No matter how illogical it was from a military viewpoint, flexible response arguably raised the *political* threshold for first use of nuclear weapons and stabilized the European status quo.

Hot War in Asia

Unlike that in Europe, the military situation in Indochina and Korea was heating up rather than cooling off. Nuclear weapons did not directly affect how the United States fought the Indochina war. But general nuclear deterrence arguably ensured that Chinese and Soviet forces did not directly enter the war. Conversely, Soviet and Chinese nuclear forces ended any U.S. military fantasies of attacking Vietnamese sanctuaries inside China.

Indeed, the Pentagon concluded that introducing U.S. nuclear weapons would work to their adversary's advantage.⁵² The United States could hardly fire nuclear weapons at guerrillas spread out in jungles and swimming in the sea of the Vietnamese people, while the adversary's allies could use them against U.S. bases in Southeast Asia. These sites contained concentrations of personnel and materiel that would have been vulnerable to nuclear retaliation by China or the Soviet Union.⁵³ The only use of nuclear weapons that sought to compel Hanoi was a month-long, secret global alert of B-52 bombers in 1969. The signal had no effect on the Vietnamese. Nor, as far as is known publicly, did it move Moscow to lean

on Hanoi. This episode represents yet another failure of attempted nuclear compellence.

Chinese Bomb

China's successful nuclear test in 1964 raised the specter of a new red peril in the Pacific. In 1963, for example, Rand analysts argued that China could directly destroy U.S. bases or allied territory in Asia, use nuclear weapons as an umbrella for overt nonnuclear and covert insurgency operations, and exploit them for political and propaganda objectives.⁵⁴ The Chinese nuclear capability endowed U.S. nuclear forces with a new rationale.

American leaders worried that the Chinese bomb might disrupt U.S. alliances in Asia.⁵⁵ Thus, President Johnson pledged in 1966 that "the leaders of China must realize that any nuclear capability they can develop can—and will—be deterred." He added that the United States would strongly support nonnuclear states against "any threat of nuclear blackmail."⁵⁶

The Chinese nuclear explosion effectively triangulated great-power politics in the Pacific region. Henceforth, like U.S. strategists, allied elites had to assume that they were targeted by Beijing as well as Moscow. In a nuclear war game between the United States and China, for example, Rand analysts postulated that the Chinese would strike at U.S. bases in Asia with their nuclear missiles and bombers. Rand estimated that only two of the targeted U.S. land bases in East Asia would survive (see table 3-1).⁵⁷

In the war game scenarios, the Rand analysts assumed that no non-U.S. nuclear-capable air forces located in Japan could be used to retaliate against Chinese preemptive nuclear strikes in Asia, nor could any U.S. bases in Japan be used for U.S. air operations. They also assumed that no non-U.S. forces would support U.S. operations. "This is based," they said, "on an assumed U.S. desire to maintain freedom of action and the need for a quick response."⁵⁸ There were limits, therefore, to the extent to which the red peril could reestablish the U.S. nuclear privileges in Japan lost in the fifties.

By 1960 service rivalry had already generated a nuclear triad of long-range submarine/naval, bomber, and missile forces. It was easy, therefore, to graft the doctrine of mutual assured destruction onto the doctrinal legacy of massive retaliation in Asia. In 1963 a Rand report recommended that the United States augment its nuclear forces in the West Pacific to enhance its ability to counter Chinese nuclear weapons.⁵⁹ In 1964 the first

Table 3-1 Rand's Nuclear War Game in Asia, 1963

A. Chinese Missile Strike

Target	Range (n mi)	Launch Site	No. of Missiles	P_{k1}^a	P_{k2}^b	Result	Remarks
Okinawa							
Kadena	675	1	2	.60	.84	Hit	
Naha	675	1	2	.60	.84	Miss	Impact error
Hawk Battery	675	1	1	.60	.84	Hit	
Hawk Battery	675	1	1	.60	.84	Hit	
South Korea							
Airfield #1	450	2	1	.88	.99	Hit	
Airfield #2	450	2	1	.88	.99	Miss	Missile abort
Airfield #3	450	2	1	.88	.99	Hit	
Osan	450	2	2	.88	.99	Hit	
Hawk Battery	450	2	1	.88	.99	Hit	
Philippines							
Clark	840	3	2	.42	.66	Miss	Impact error
Basra	840	3	2	.42	.66	Hit	
Subic Bay	840	3	2	.42	.66	Miss	Impact error
Japan							
Yokota	820	1	1	.44	.69	Hit	
Itazuke	670	2	1	.60	.84	Hit	
Iwakuni	670	2	1	.60	.84	Hit	
Misawa	750	2	1	.52	.77	Miss	Impact error
Taiwan							
Ping-Tung	550	3	1	.76	.94	Hit	
Tai-Nan	550	3	1	.76	.94	Hit	
Chai-I	550	3	1	.76	.94	Hit	
Kung-Kuan	500	1	1	.83	.97	Miss	Missile abort
Tao-Yuan	500	1	1	.83	.97	Hit	

Source: B. Jaeger and M. Weiner, *Military Aspects of a Study of the Implications of a Communist Chinese Nuclear Capability*, Rand RM-3418-PR, Santa Monica, March 1963, pp. 35-36; released under U.S. Freedom of Information Act request.

P_{k1} = Kill probability for one missile.

P_{k2} = Kill probability for two missiles.

Polaris submarines entered the Pacific to offset the Chinese nuclear force. The same year, a squadron of nuclear-armed B-52 bombers was sent to Guam to add nuclear teeth to the deterrence rhetoric aimed at China.⁶⁰

Intermediate-range cruise missiles stationed in Taiwan and Okinawa were removed by 1969.⁶¹ That move freed up the two aircraft carriers code-named Alpha which until then had been stationed off the Soviet Far East loaded with nuclear weapons. The surface fleet became preoccupied with bombing Indochina from Yankee Station in the South China Sea. Farther west, the Seventh Fleet linked the Atlantic and Pacific fleets through the Indian Ocean, creating a global U.S. navy for the first time.

Table 3-1 (continued)

B. Chinese Bomber Strike							
Target	Beagle	Badger	Fighters	Nuclear	Conventional	Result	Remarks
Okinawa							
Kadena		1		1		Hit	
Naha		1		1		Miss	Alert AWF are airborne
Mace #1		1		1		Miss	100 psi hard
Mace #2		1		1		Hit	100 psi hard
Mace #3		1		1		Hit	100 psi hard
Mace #4		1		1		Hit	100 psi hard
South Korea							
Base #1	1			1		Hit	
Base #2	1			1		Hit	
Base #3	1			1		Hit	
Osan	1			1		Hit	Six AWF are airborne
Philippines							
Clark		1		1		Hit	10 F-100 and 2 AWF are airborne
Basra		1		1		Hit	Carrier sunk
Subic Bay		1		1		Hit	Carrier sunk
Taiwan							
Ping-Tung	1		3		x	Hit	
Tai-Nan	1		3		x	Hit	
Chai-I	1		3		x	Hit	
Kung-Kuan	1		3		x	Hit	
Tao-Yuan	1		3		x	Hit	

Three Nonnuclear Principles

In Japan nuclear politics revived in 1964 when opponents protested visits of nuclear-armed warships and the Vietnam War. Pressure built in the mid-1960s, culminating in popular protest at the use of Japanese ports for the USS *Enterprise* to respond to the North Korean seizure of the USS *Pueblo* in 1968. To calm the troubled political waters, Sato issued his Three Nonnuclear Principles in 1967. At the same time, he openly announced that Japan relied on the United States to extend deterrence to Japan against nuclear threats under the security treaty—until then, an unthinkable public admission.⁶²

To placate and divide domestic opposition to this move, he declared in 1969 that Japan would accept the reversion of Okinawa (lost to the U.S. military in 1945) to Japan only if the United States withdrew its nuclear weapons.⁶³

The reversion directly threatened the interests of the U.S. military in Okinawa. The military not only used the islands for forward basing, but

also governed the territory. In the winter of 1969 the bureaucracy in Washington, D.C., wrestled over whether the United States should insist on keeping nuclear weapons in Okinawa after reversion.

The State Department and its ally in the Pentagon, the Office of International Security Affairs, argued that keeping nuclear weapons could destroy the pro-U.S. government in Japan and split the alliance. The military countered that it needed Okinawa to keep nuclear weapons stored in support of nuclear deterrence, the basis of U.S. military strategy and alliances in the West Pacific—including Korea.

The issue was passed up the bureaucracy unresolved, all the way to Kissinger and Nixon. President Nixon chose to trade nuclear weapons in Okinawa for the Japanese cession of greater U.S. flexibility over its use of *all* bases in Japan, not just Okinawa. In late October 1969 Nixon met Sato in Washington where the two leaders struck this bargain.⁶⁴ The Marines removed the last nuclear weapons from Okinawa on March 6, 1972, when Okinawa was returned to Japanese sovereignty.⁶⁵

Thus, by 1969 the Japanese elite had openly signed onto U.S. nuclear policy in spite of public opinion. In spite of the fact that the United States had to remove the last of its ground-based nuclear weapons from Okinawa, now part of Japan, the ideological basis of U.S. nuclear hegemony was slowly pervading the Japanese elite and even seeping into the popular political consciousness.

At the same time, U.S. military leaders began to explore the feasibility of increased Japanese contributions to U.S. military strategy in the Far East. Initially, they flew trial balloons as to the possibility of a Japanese or U.S.-Japanese nuclear-armed sea-based antiballistic missile system. An influential pronuclear grouping in the ruling Liberal Democratic party gave credence to the American misconception that Japan might accept a "two key" arrangement whereby U.S. nuclear warheads would be put onto Japanese-made delivery systems. These efforts ended abruptly in July 1971 because they ran counter to the logic of Henry Kissinger's secret trip to China. The Pentagon's barely disguised pressure on Japan to rearm and consider an independent nuclear force on the European model was hardly conducive to tilting China toward the United States in the great-power triangle.

Thus, the tendency toward institutional integration between the U.S. and Japanese militaries and efforts to develop a coherent nuclear ideology specific to the Ampo collided with unilateral U.S. moves. The "Nixon shocks" of 1972 ended any further development of overt U.S. nuclear hegemony in Japan.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, U.S. strategists persisted in thinking that increased consultations might lead to a nuclear breakthrough in Japan. In 1974, for example, a secret Rand report stated:

In view of the desirability of upgrading the credibility of the U.S. nuclear guarantee to Japan, consideration should also be given to informal consultation with the Japanese Government—providing it is agreeable—on nuclear capabilities. Such informal interaction could be along the lines of, but more limited than, that of the Nuclear Planning Group in NATO.⁶⁷

Entrenched in Korea

U.S. efforts to integrate Japan into an explicit nuclear alliance had been wrecked on the twin reefs of Japanese public opinion and the emerging great power triangle. Nowhere in Asia could the United States look forward to a NATO-style alliance. Consequently, there was little allied demand to develop a nuclear doctrine specific to circumstances in the region or to legitimate nuclear strategy among allied publics.

Ad hoc events in Korea did activate the nuclear forces on occasion. When, for example, North Korea grabbed the USS *Pueblo* in January 1968, the initial reaction of American decisionmakers was to drop a nuclear weapon on Pyongyang. According to Clark Clifford, then U.S. secretary of defense, this idea was dropped when “early emotional factors were suppressed and repelled.”⁶⁸ The fact that all the U.S. F-4 fighter planes held on constant alert on Korean airfields were loaded only with nuclear weapons did not help the leaders to think clearly.⁶⁹ The initial reaction and the forces available corresponded more with massive retaliation than flexible response.

Nuclear strategy in Korea also reflected U.S. concern that China might intervene again in Korea. A 1967 Pentagon war game script, for example, stated that

The twelve ROKA [Republic of Korea Army] and two U.S. divisions in South Korea had, since 1970, keyed their defense plans almost entirely to the early use of nuclear weapons. This doctrine had been widely discussed in military journals and apparently [had] not been overlooked in Peking.⁷⁰

In the scenario, a combined Chinese–North Korean invasion force attacks Seoul while the United States is diverted in Europe by a confrontation over Europe with the Soviets. Finally, the U.S. commander in Korea asks for authorization to evacuate or to escalate to tactical nuclear weapons.⁷¹

The U.S. military were still planning to fight and win a nuclear war in Korea. On May 20, 1966, for example, the Eighth U.S. Army held a targeting conference that reviewed Annex U to the Eighth U.S. Army’s operational plan, entitled “Nuclear Operations.”⁷² To sustain these war

plans, an extensive supply infrastructure for nuclear weapons was set up in Korea:

Starting on 12 June 1966, the 16 incoming airshipments added 85 weapons to the Eighth Army stockpile. Helicopter movement was established as the primary means of nuclear weapon movement within Korea. Coordination of weapons movement and temporary holding at OSAN AB [Air Base] eliminated need for highway transport of any weapons. Action was started to negotiate a formal host-tenant agreement with US Air Forces Korea. The agreement will delineate responsibilities of Army and Air Force in receipt and shipment of nuclear weapons through Osan AB.⁷³

The United States also honed its nuclear fighting forces in Korea. On February 28, 1967, for example, the Eighth U.S. Army held a planning conference at Osan Air Base that discussed "procedures for request of air delivered nuclear weapons."⁷⁴ The Eighth U.S. Army also held a major command post exercise in 1966 called Counter Blow. The exercise provided commanders "the opportunity to test plans for a counteroffensive which integrated nuclear weapons into the scheme of maneuver."⁷⁵

From a Military Theater . . .

Atomic demolition munitions (ADMs) were first introduced into army arsenals in 1964.⁷⁶ By 1966 at the latest, Special ADMs had arrived in South Korea. That year, an operational review team arrived to inspect the nuclear surety of the ADM teams.⁷⁷

ADMS were central to war plans for blocking a North Korean invasion. They were to be used, for example, not so much against North Korean armor advancing down invasion corridors as to impede North Korean advance beyond Seoul itself. According to an engineer responsible for ADM operations in Korea in 1969, "The targeting at that time was all for how to do a very quick retreat and to be able to do impasses and to just do a scaled withdrawal where you could take out strategic point along the way."⁷⁸ "Strategic points" included Kimpo airfield, the Han River bridge footings, and other point targets that could not be destroyed easily with plastic explosives. Ironically, obliterating Kimpo would have also destroyed a good part of that side of the river. Many of the refugee and South Korean and American troops would also have been trapped under a fallout cloud that would have passed over Seoul due to prevailing winds.⁷⁹

ADMs were then stored at Osan Air Base south of Seoul and not on the DMZ. ADM units in South Korea routinely trained on dummy weap

ons in concrete blockhouses known locally as “monkeyhouses.”⁸⁰ In war-time, however, ADMs would have been forward-deployed immediately as they required early first use to avoid capture of weapons or engineers. Each ADM unit had up to fifteen possible targets but only one or two actual weapons. All ADM targets were in South not North Korea. Explains a former ADM engineer,

ADMs could also be used to contaminate an advance area and to stop an armored attack. Nikes could hit into North Korea, they were the offensive side, followed by the artillery. The next level up from the artillery is the ADM. This little 60 pound device was 20 Kilotons. You could get two weeks worth of contamination out of it so that an area was impassable. These plans were all written in the 50s. We had new targets, but the concepts of using tactical ADMs in these engagements was still pinned to that kind of philosophy.⁸¹

Batteries of Nike Hercules, apparently with nuclear warheads, were also kept forward-deployed, implying to the North Koreans that the United States would immediately use nuclear weapons at the outset of a war. A former U.S. security official relates the haphazard manner whereby the Nikes came to be relocated in 1971:

We went in a helicopter over the Nike sites. They were on hilltops within artillery range of the North Koreans. We were all just appalled. They were like tiny little outposts within spitting distance of the North Koreans, like little castles on hilltops. They were virtually inaccessible except by helicopter. Nutter [then head of the Pentagon’s International Security Affairs] immediately ordered them dismantled. They may have left a few in the rear near Seoul. They had been there for years, nobody knew or cared less. It was insane.⁸²

The warheads were shipped from the DMZ on helicopters to trucks waiting at the storage site at Tobongsan near Camp Casey, north of Seoul. The trucks then left in conspicuous convoys, prompting South Koreans to ask embarrassed U.S. intelligence officers if nuclear weapons were being removed from Korea.⁸³

The United States also linked offshore nuclear forces to South Korea. In contrast to the situation in Japanese ports, where there were tumultuous protests, at Pusan the nuclear-capable attack submarine USS *Plunger* docked unimpeded in 1969. According to the army, the visit was arranged to “assure the ROKG that sophisticated vessels like the *Plunger* are ready to come to its assistance should the need arise.”⁸⁴ As it would have been unlikely for the United States to employ its expensive nuclear attack submarines in a war against North Korea alone, such visits were likely aimed as much at Beijing and Moscow as at Pyongyang.

... To Theater of the Absurd

By the end of the 1960s, the U.S. Army had established a nuclear domain in Korea that was mostly out of sight, out of mind in Washington. The army's cavalier attitude is typified by their training in Korea U.S. troops who were fighting in Vietnam. Without disguising their uniforms—and oblivious to the political implications should word have leaked out—artillery crews were flown up from Vietnam in 1966 for “nuclear refresher training” with U.S. 155-mm and 8-inch training weapons.⁸⁵

Although nuclear deterrence based on threats had been conceptualized largely in the Korean War, the army's implementation of massive retaliation over the next two decades harked back more to the notion that nuclear weapons should be used to fight for compellence. The doctrine posed a terrible dilemma for Koreans and Americans alike. Forward-deployed nuclear weapons implied early first use. Being vulnerable, these weapons almost begged the North Koreans to preempt in a crisis. Thus, forward deployment threatened to force the United States to “use 'em or lose 'em” in a war. The wartime use of short-range nuclear weapons implied abandoning, vaporizing, and irradiating the national capital, Seoul. In short, nuclear strategy in Korea was beset with contradictions.

U.S. nuclear troops were keenly aware of the absurdity of their preparations for nuclear warfighting in Korea. Indeed, South Koreans might have been shocked at the shenanigans among nuclear troops who could not understand why they were preparing to save south Korea by destroying it. Living with nuclear war day and night was so stressful that individuals and groups behaved outrageously to relieve the psychological pressure. Relates one former nuclear technician who was in Korea in 1968:

We'd have parties in the [ADM storage] monkeyhouse. If we really wanted to get fucked up, that's where nobody could bother you. The sarge had a party. He sent me down to the village to get some women into the monkeyroom. The dummies [mock ADMs] were locked up in their vaults, and the practice room was completely empty. I brought a couple of hookers up. The alcohol was subsidized, there being no tax. So you could get premium Scotch at 5 bucks for a bottle. Even with low pay, you could afford to drink as much as you wanted. This is where the corruption comes in. The officers would cover for each other tremendously. Partying in the monkeyhouse was okay. Bringing Korean hookers into a secure facility was not.⁸⁶

Illicit sex, alcohol, and corruption were pervasive among the troops as they went through the motions of nuclear warfighting. They followed a gruelling schedule of inspections and exercises designed to impress the

senior brass who constantly visited the units. Yet anyone who pointed out the paradoxes and inconsistencies of the nuclear warplans was isolated, ostracized, and threatened with being posted to Vietnam.⁸⁷

That these plans were of low inherent credibility—in spite of the public bravado of massive retaliation—is evidenced by American plans immediately to evacuate or destroy nuclear weapons stocked in Korea if they were not fired at the outset. “If they weren’t going to be used,” said a former nuclear engineer in Korea, “then the highest priority was to get ’em out or to destroy them.”⁸⁸

The army was still preparing to fight nuclear war in Korea as if nothing had changed since Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They ignored even the lesson of the Korean War that nuclear weapons could not be used on the battlefield. Undeterred, they planned to defend south Korea with nuclear weapons by pretending that nuclear weapons would just make bigger fires to be exploited by army maneuver forces. In reality, nuclear war is qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from classical groundwar. By attempting the impossible—nuclear war at short-range—the army was unable to solve the riddles posed by its own nuclear strategy in Korea.

4

Inflexible Response

Senator Symington: We have now gone to country splitting, you might say. First we split Germany. Then we split China. We stay with billions and billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of people in the case of Germany, China we stay with billions of dollars and thousands of people. Then we split Korea, and stay there with billions of dollars and tens of thousands of military, all at heavy cost to the taxpayer. Then we split Vietnam, go in there with hundreds of thousands of people and tens of billions of dollars. Now we split Laos, and go in there with hundreds of millions of dollars and lots of people. Do you know of any other country we plan to split pretty soon?

Mr. Porter: No sir.

—U.S. Senate Hearing, February 25, 1970

Except for brief crises such as the *Pueblo* affair, U.S. policymakers paid little attention to Korean affairs for most of the Vietnam War. Their main concern was to keep South Korean troops fighting in Vietnam where they were far cheaper than American GIs.

Moreover, relations between North Korea and its erstwhile ally the Soviet Union were strained at this time. It appeared that the expanding Soviet nuclear forces in the Far East did not extend much deterrence to the North Koreans. Consequently, massive retaliation in Korea did not seem overly risky in Korea to U.S. strategists.²

U.S. nuclear strategy in Korea in the early seventies therefore retained elements of massive retaliation—specifically, the threat to retaliate massively and immediately against a nonnuclear enemy—with aspects of flexible response—especially new doctrine and weapons for nuclear warfighting imported from Europe. Nuclear strategy in Korea at this time is therefore more accurately called inflexible rather flexible response.

“In Korea,” says a former U.S. ambassador to Seoul, “military deployments reflected the weight we gave to nuclear weapons. We held South Korean forces down; had small American forces; and we did plan to use nuclear weapons at low thresholds.”³

In any case, the wholesale transport of flexible response to Korea would have been fraught with problems. Political and military circumstances in Korea differed radically from those in Europe. Unlike the Warsaw Pact, North Korea had no nuclear weapons with which to counter U.S. nuclear threats. Furthermore, the political and military context in

Korea was patently unstable. The experience of brutal colonialism, partition at the end of world war, and the transition from a traditional, largely agrarian society to two modern, industrialized societies, one capitalist and another socialist, had been telescoped into half a century. Political volatility made reliance on conventional forces for deterrence in Korea more problematic than in Europe where boundaries had stabilized by 1960.⁴

This chapter examines President Richard Nixon's reassertion of realpolitik in the face of the vested interests in the policy of inflexible response in Korea. The realpolitik current, however, squared off against practitioners of militant containment such as Defense Secretary James Schlesinger. Ultimately, the army was able to turn both these currents against the threat posed by internationalist currents during the Nixon-Ford era, and then against isolationist currents under Carter. Ironically, the adjustments made by President Nixon and his successor Gerald Ford to the nuclear force posture in Korea were controverted by a resurgence of nuclear warfighting doctrine emanating from Europe.

The chapter also discloses how the United States regrouped after its defeat in Vietnam, thereby linking nuclear weapons in Korea even more closely to U.S. interests in Japan than it had in the 1960s. It shows how advocates of militant containment leaned on the nuclear crutch in Korea after 1975, especially during the "axes of August" crisis of 1976. Finally, it exposes the strategic bankruptcy of the military's doctrinal revision of its nuclear strategy in Korea in 1976.

Revival of Realpolitik

Nixon was devoted to restoring U.S. centrality in world politics in an era of relative U.S. political and economic decline. In realpolitik fashion that recalled Kennan's U.S.-centered internationalism, Nixon declared in 1969 that the United States would no longer defend peripheral interests. Thereafter, he announced, U.S. allies had to relieve the United States of its regional and local security commitments. In the security realm, he maintained American hegemonic leadership by supplying strategic nuclear forces for deterrence and compellence contingencies. But he also concentrated on becoming the pivot power in the emerging great-power triangle by tilting toward China.⁵

His global "grand design" swept away many of the ideologically charged boundaries maintained by the militant containment policy current since the Korean War.⁶ Especially with respect to the Soviet Union, he sought a more fluid and flexible competition than could be achieved with military intimidation. But nowhere was it more urgent to revise the rigid line drawing and military commitments than in East Asia.⁷

In this big picture, Korea was relatively unimportant. As the Vietnam War wound down, therefore, Nixon and his lieutenants moved to reduce the open-ended commitment of U.S. ground troops to South Korea that clashed with his vision of an offshore naval-nuclear strategy that avoided U.S. involvement in risky regional conflicts. In 1970, he announced a plan to withdraw one of the two divisions of U.S. troops stationed in Korea. This initiative was aborted by critics who argued that it would make nuclear weapons in Korea more vulnerable to attack or capture.⁸

The following year, however, Nixon returned to the fray. He overruled forceful South Korean protests and in March 1971 simply withdrew the Seventh Division from Korea on the grounds that he had a more urgent need for army forces in Indochina. He also ordered the second Division to move back from its frontline position on the demilitarized zone, out of the direct line of fire. To compensate, the United States provided billions of dollars of military aid to South Korea. It also reiterated its nuclear support for allies in East Asia.

The same year, Francis Underhill wrote a notorious memorandum in the State Department that advocated total military disengagement from South Korea. The U.S. ambassador in Seoul, Philip Habib, reportedly also sent cables recommending troop reductions.⁹ In August 1971 Defense Secretary Melvin Laird issued a program decision memorandum to reduce the remaining Second Infantry Division to one brigade by end of 1974. The following year, the target date was extended to end of 1975.

Laird's policy was revived in 1974 by his successor, James Schlesinger, who told Congress that U.S. Army troops in South Korea would be gradually withdrawn and replaced by a mobile reserve force of army troops based in Hawaii and marines based in Guam.¹⁰ Schlesinger was supportive of withdrawal because it was consistent with consolidating U.S. military capabilities to compete more effectively with the Soviet Union in the global arena, especially in the Third World.

Kissinger, however, wanted to fry different fish than did Schlesinger. He was interested in withdrawal *after* settlement of the Korean conflict and neutralization of the peninsula had been achieved by strategic diplomacy.

In fact, a current with strong internationalist overtones had emerged in Washington by this time and fed into the realpolitik strategic diplomacy in Asia. In 1973, for example, the Brookings Institution had recommended to the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency that the United States should reduce its reliance on military force and in particular on tactical nuclear weapons in Asia. To avoid a clash with China over Korea that could threaten fundamental U.S. interests in constructing a stable international order, the Brookings team urged that the United States seek common action with China to reduce sources of instability in Asia by regional arms control agreements.¹¹ They noted that

the most likely area of common agreement in Asia in the next few years seems to be *Korea*, where both nations might wish to reduce the risk of a great power clash and to help maintain stability in the region. In particular, the United States should consider a Korean arms control plan which could include a nuclear-free-zone, a renunciation-of-force pledge, and possibly also a no-first-use agreement specifically conditioned on renunciation of the use of force in Korea by the PRC.¹²

These proposals and others like them circulating in the State Department and the Pentagon all presumed that U.S. troops would remain until new agreements were struck and implemented. At his meeting with South Korean foreign minister Kim Dong-jo on March 20, 1974, Kissinger confirmed the U.S. commitment and announced that no more troops would be withdrawn from Korea. His position was later affirmed by President Nixon, ending any further forays by Schlesinger.¹³

Kissinger appears to have been operating in typically Machiavellian fashion toward Korea. He set out to reassure further South Korea. President Ford visited Seoul in November 1974 to reaffirm the U.S. commitment. Ford also assured President Park that the United States had no plans for further troop withdrawal.

After the fall of Vietnam in 1975, Kissinger publicly warned North Korea not to test U.S. resolve in Korea. All the while, he was reportedly preparing to talk with Pyongyang and to convene a great power conference to settle the Korean conflict.¹⁴ Between 1974 and 1975, he tried to bring both North and South Korea into full membership in the United Nations. He also offered to set up an alternative to the armistice and UN Command, telling the UN on September 22 that the United States would explore "other measures to reduce tension, including the possibility of a large conference to negotiate a more fundamental arrangement."¹⁵ In November 1975, however, the UN General Assembly deadlocked on the issue, blocking further progress.

Loss of Faith

The South Korean military was greatly discomforted by geopolitical winds heralded by the Nixon withdrawal and U.S. overtures to its mortal enemy, China. They were also convinced that Kissinger's machinations would lead ultimately to an unstable sellout rather than to a stable settlement that protected their interests. These developments convinced Park Chung Hee that South Korea might have to fight alone against North Korea. To Park, military self-reliance included nuclear self-reliance. In 1971 he lost faith in the reliability of the U.S. nuclear umbrella and began to develop a home

grown bomb, even though the United States still had hundreds of nuclear weapons in Korea (see Chapter 13).

As noted in chapter 3, the United States might have welcomed or at least accommodated a nuclear-armed Japan in its global nuclear strategy. But the United States could not allow a client state such as South Korea to leapfrog to great-power status and undermine the global nonproliferation regime, a buttress of U.S. nuclear hegemony. In 1976 Kissinger ended the South Korean bomb program by threatening to end the security alliance that kept U.S. troops and nuclear weapons in Korea. The South Korean gambit had failed.

Doctrinal Incoherence

Ignorant of Kissinger's stratagems and Park's bomb program, the U.S. Army adjusted its strategy in Korea. On the one hand, the army adopted elements of flexible response in Korea such as upgrading conventional deterrence and defense so that nuclear weapons became a less immediate option. On the other, the army also applied a new nuclear warfighting doctrine to Korea.

The most important change was General James Hollingsworth's decision in 1973 to fight a North Korean attack at the demilitarized zone rather than to escalate immediately to nuclear fires or to retreat to prepared defense lines between Seoul and the demilitarized zone. This strategy distinctly deemphasized nuclear weapons.

By coincidence, the army revised its global policy of using battlefield nuclear weapons the same year. It finally recognized that any use would be limited. But the doctrine still assumed use. It tried to revive the credibility of nuclear warfighting to compel adversaries to terminate a war before it spiraled out of control. To these ends, the new doctrine focused on developing discrete packages of nuclear targets that would allow the political command to keep control and respond quickly to fast-moving battlefields.

The doctrine was developed by Army HQ in Europe, for European conditions.¹⁶ It was no less fantastic than past plans for battlefield nuclear war. Yet the army's top brass in Washington virtually ignored these intractable problems. They were absorbed with the implications of the Arab-Israeli War in 1973 for tank warfare in Europe, a "real" battlefield unlike the jungles of Indochina. Unfortunately, that war highlighted the lethality of modern weapons and blurred the very distinction between nuclear and conventional war that the doctrinal revision strove to implant in army minds. Its application in Korea controverted Nixon's effort to reduce the automatic U.S. involvement by adjusting the U.S. force posture in Korea.

Limited Nuclear War

In 1975 the Pentagon's new emphasis on nuclear warfighting introduced by James Schlesinger was transposed to Korea, and U.S. Forces Korea began to plan for "Regional Nuclear Options."¹⁷ A year earlier, U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Creighton Abrams told Congress on March 5, 1974, that the Lance missile was being deployed to South Korea to fight limited nuclear wars:

Modernized tactical nuclear weapons, such as Lance, which can be effectively employed with minimal undesirable collateral effects will significantly improve the deterrent and warfighting capability of U.S. general purpose forces. . . It is designed for the attack of light materiel targets, and will provide an extended range counterbattery and suppression capability against enemy surface-to-surface and surface-to-air systems respectively.¹⁸

He defended the army's ground-based nuclear weapons against congressional criticism of their vulnerability and redundancy before air force and naval nuclear weapons. Nuclear artillery, he asserted, "has a unique, absolute all-weather characteristic" making army and air force or ground- and air-delivered nuclear weapons "complementary."

Nixon had pulled almost all U.S. troops back from the demilitarized zone. But the army had repositioned them so that they were still in harm's way at the outset of any serious war in Korea. It was obvious that nuclear weapons co-located with these troops still imposed a "use-them-or-lose-them" imperative on the U.S. president in wartime. If war broke out, he would have had to choose immediately between a politically unacceptable use of the weapons and the equally unpalatable withdrawal under fire.¹⁹ In 1974 the *Washington Post* reported that helicopters routinely flew nuclear weapons from storage depots within 35–50 miles of the demilitarized zone to its very edge.²⁰ That year, electronic warning devices were reportedly installed on the chain-link fence around the depots, supplementing the special vapor lights and guard towers that identified the nuclear storage bunkers. No doubt due to concern about the vulnerability of this siting, the forward-deployed nuclear weapons were relocated and consolidated in a southern storage facility at Kunsan Air Base in 1975.²¹

These three developments—the withdrawal in 1971 of U.S. troops (excepting those guarding Panmunjon) from the demilitarized zone, the forward defense strategy announced in 1973, and the redeployment of nuclear weapons away from the demilitarized zone in 1975—reversed the political and military logic of nuclear weapons in Korea. Before, it was said that the physical presence of nuclear weapons in the war zone made escalation near automatic and therefore credible. The trip wire itself was nuclear.²²

After the relocation, nuclear weapons were no longer right on the demilitarized zone. Now it was the prospect of the inevitable American casualties in a new Korean War that activated American nuclear deterrence. U.S. ground troops rather than nuclear weapons served as the trip wire. This adjustment confirmed the view of U.S. military and State Department officials that nuclear weapons had been relegated to hedging against the failure of conventional deterrence and defense and would not be used for warfighting.²³ The adjustment therefore marked the definite passing of the massive retaliation era and its replacement by unadulterated inflexible response.

Geopolitical Disguise

Farther afield, American strategists began looking for ways that nuclear weapons could be used to implement the Nixon Doctrine in Asia—including Korea.²⁴ They worried that U.S. tactical nuclear doctrine and operational concepts for limited nuclear war in Asia did not support U.S. objectives in the region. In short, they wanted to find a geopolitical disguise for organizational interest.

One answer that linked the State Department's interest in Japan with the army's interest in Korea was to argue that nuclear deployments in South Korea allowed the United States to circumvent partly the Japanese nuclear "allergy." As a Pentagon study in 1974 said, nuclear forces in South Korea "are tangible evidence of the U.S. nuclear guarantee and as such have considerable political and psychological as well as military value" in Japan and Taiwan as well.²⁵ Richard Walker, later Reagan's Ambassador to South Korea, explained in 1975,

The presence of conventional and even tactical nuclear American forces in Korea helps to confirm strategic guarantees for Tokyo and to discourage any Japanese thoughts about a French solution: a *force de frappe* of their own. This is a fact well understood by leaders of many political persuasions in Tokyo and also appreciated in Peking.²⁶

This convergence of interest later proved crucial to the militant containment policy current in defeating the trilateralist and isolationist policy currents that had impelled U.S. troop withdrawal from Korea.

Leaning on the Nuclear Crutch

After the pullout from Saigon in 1975, the U.S. Army refocused on Europe. By 1976 powerful army factions held that a static defense in Europe

was too defensive and would likely lower the nuclear threshold. A new doctrine based on a more active defense was declared that year.²⁷ U.S. Commander in Korea Gen. Richard Stilwell had similar criticisms of the static, forward defense adopted in 1973. He quickly introduced and tested the active defense philosophy by initiating the U.S.-South Korean Team Spirit exercise, a dry run for a retaliatory attack on the north and a precursor of the Airland Battle doctrine imported during the Reagan administration.

In the aftermath of Vietnam, the United States also leaned heavily on the nuclear crutch in Korea. By invoking nuclear threats, the United States abandoned Nixon's realpolitik for militant containment.

Schlesinger came to the Pentagon from a right-wing, prorollback strand of Rand Corporation that favored enlisting China in a de facto military alliance against the Soviet Union.²⁸ U.S.-Soviet rapprochement rendered obsolete the notion that the United States might have to fight China in Korea. Indeed, by 1973 U.S. defense guidance already recognized that U.S. troops would likely leave South Korea in the long run.²⁹

In February 1975 Schlesinger testified to Congress that U.S. troops were in Korea for great-power rather than deterrence reasons. "It is now the political rationale that calls for a U.S. presence," he said, "rather than the military rationale which was preeminent during the late fifties and early sixties."³⁰ A strong advocate of limited nuclear warfighting, Schlesinger did not hesitate to invoke the nuclear threat as U.S. Defense Secretary.

In June 1975, for example, he publicly threatened North Korea with nuclear attack in retaliation for unspecified aggression. He confirmed that the United States intended to keep nuclear weapons in Korea, stating that the United States "cannot foreclose any option."³¹ He emphasized, "If circumstances were to require the use of tactical nuclear weapons . . . I think that would be carefully considered. . . I do not think it would be wise to test [American] reactions."³²

Compellence in August

The first test of the new policy was not long in coming. Starting August 20, 1976, after North Korean forces killed two American soldiers at Panmunjom, nuclear-capable B-52 bombers from Guam flew up the Korean peninsula toward the demilitarized zone, veering off at the last moment (see chapter 8).³³

"They didn't know what was in them, and it blew their fucking minds," recalled a U.S. intelligence analyst who monitored the North

Korean frontline communications during the flights. "We scared the living shit out of them" he added.³⁴

After the crisis subsided, the Pentagon announced that the B-52s would "continue simulated bombing runs over Korea once-or-twice monthly."³⁵

The aftermath to the initial melée on August 18 contained all the elements of inadvertent escalation from loss of control. At 1100 on August 19, U.S. Forces Korea was put on a high alert for the first time since 1953. The North Koreans promptly reciprocated the increased U.S.-ROK readiness by going onto "wartime" posture.³⁶

In planning his operation to complete the tree cutting, the U.S. commander in Korea, General Richard Stilwell, made two crucial moves. First, he ensured that neither the national commanders in Washington nor the Pacific commander in Hawaii could talk directly to his field commanders. He achieved this insulation by arranging for all the secure communication circuits to end with microphones covered by styrofoam coffee cups in his office and in the UN Command forward post in Seoul, making it impossible for anyone but himself to talk to his subordinates.³⁷

Second, Stilwell was particularly concerned the night before the tree-cutting operation (August 20) that his commanders be able to employ artillery and rockets should the North Koreans open fire. Although requiring them to consult with him, he predelegated to his subordinates the authority to initiate these fires. No such consultation was required, however, if communications had been lost.

Moreover, Washington had already decided that if North Koreans retaliated, then they wanted Stilwell's forces to fire on a North Korean army barracks with artillery—that is, to escalate. In relaying this directive to his commanders, Stilwell added that acting on it required his express approval. Presumably even Stilwell saw the potential loss of control in this order and wanted to inactivate the command if they could not reach him.³⁸

On the night of August 20, the atmosphere in Washington at the Emergency Conference Room of the National Military Command Center was like a crowd waiting for a heavyweight fight to start. It was already early morning in South Korea and General Stilwell was moving his tree-cutting task force forward under the cover of darkness.

At 0700 exactly on August 21, and without any warning to North Korea, a task force of American military engineers and ROK Army special forces entered the Joint Security Area. Seven helicopter gunships escorting twenty helicopters loaded with a rifle company circled to the south between the Imjin River and the DMZ. At 0705 a message was passed to the KPA informing them that the tree cutting was about to be completed. Within minutes, over one-hundred-fifty heavily armed North Koreans ar-

rived, but appeared bewildered and intimidated. The helicopter carrying Major General Brady, who commanded the task force, flying above Panmunjom was hit by two rounds of gunfire but landed safely.³⁹

In short, the U.S. national command had approved of an operation in which they could not communicate directly with their nuclear-capable ground forces and that which they fully expected could lead to war with North Korea. It is interesting to speculate what might have happened if the North Koreans had downed Brady's helicopter rather than merely holed it.

The U.S. response to the August provocation by North Korea was entangled in presidential politics. It gave President Gerald Ford an opportunity to contrast his image at the Republican National Convention in Kansas City with that of contender Ronald Reagan and in the imminent presidential elections with that of Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter.⁴⁰ For in June 1976 Carter had said, "It will be possible to withdraw our ground forces from South Korea on a phased basis over a time span to be determined after consultation with both South Korea and Japan."⁴¹

The U.S. response in August 1976 was tailored to provide President Ford with a macho image for electoral purposes. The B-52 flights were approved by the National Security Council after being cleared by the commander in chief and U.S. ambassador in Korea, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the State Department.⁴²

Although the stratagem coerced Kim Il Sung to comply with American wishes, it failed to reelect President Ford. Carter's election not only dislodged Ford from the White House, but it was also the final nail in the coffin of Kissinger's moves to employ great-power diplomacy to defuse the northern threat. A battle loomed between entrenched bureaucratic interests in implementing a policy of militant containment in East Asia, and the trilateralist and isolationist policy currents that dominated Carter's campaign. As we shall see in the next chapter, interests ultimately prevailed, fighting Carter to a standstill and defeating his policy of withdrawing from Korea.

SAI Analysis

Ironically, even as Carter's team was moving to pull nuclear weapons out of Korea, the military was analyzing tactical nuclear warfare in Korea. The emphasis on nuclear threat rhetoric and the August incident had stimulated the military to conduct a major overhaul of U.S. nuclear war-fighting strategy in Korea. As so little work on nuclear war in Korea had been done in-house, the Pentagon awarded the study in 1976 to a private firm, Science Applications, Inc. (SAI).

SAI used analytical methods developed in Europe for examining nuclear conflicts. It applied this method, as the study put it delicately, to "the less definitive and heretofore lightly treated Korean theater."⁴³ It was concerned not with how best to *deter* North Korea with nuclear threats, but with how to *use* nuclear weapons to compel North Korea in wartime. It was as if nothing had been learned since the Johns Hopkins study in 1951 (see chapter 2). Since the study exemplifies the politically myopic and technically driven nature of nuclear war planning in Korea, it is worth examining in detail.

The study set out to determine the vulnerability of North Korean attacking forces to U.S. tactical nuclear attack. To this end, it posed two "representative" military scenarios for North Korean attack, and then examined the military factors that affected the effectiveness of nuclear attack under varying conditions. Table 4-1 summarizes these factors, which were incorporated into a computer analysis using the Combat System Survivability Model.⁴⁴

SAI assumed that the North Koreans would attack down the Chorwon corridor leading from the demilitarized zone to Seoul. It postulated two attack scenarios, a shallow "penetration" into South Korea, and a deep "penetration."

The shallow attack scenario assumed that one North Korean infantry division would attack over a 5 kilometer front against a South Korean defending division, and would manage to thrust 8 kilometers south over an 8-hour period. At that time, 85 percent of the combat arms in the attacking reinforced infantry division were said to be within 7 kilometers of the forward edge of the battle area and therefore subject to tactical nuclear attack by U.S. nuclear artillery, missiles, and aircraft.⁴⁵

SAI's deep attack scenario related to a two-division North Korean attack penetrating to a depth of about 15 kilometers into South Korea. In the deep attack, the North Korean forces are more uniformly distributed than in the shallow case, and the shape of the forward edge of the battlefield is more distinct due to the channeling effect of mountainous terrain.⁴⁶

In either case, the attacking North Korean forces would present tempting "target arrays." According to SAI, the thermal and nuclear radiation and blast from tactical nuclear attack would expose North Korean units to three kinds of nuclear effects: direct, indirect, and internal. In turn, these effects would produce three levels of damage to North Korean units: total incapacitation, partial degradation, or mere impairment due to loss of support.⁴⁷

The logical structure of SAI's analysis is shown in figure 4-1. The calculation begins with the military scenarios sketched above which result in nuclear counter-attack. SAI then defined the operational characteristics

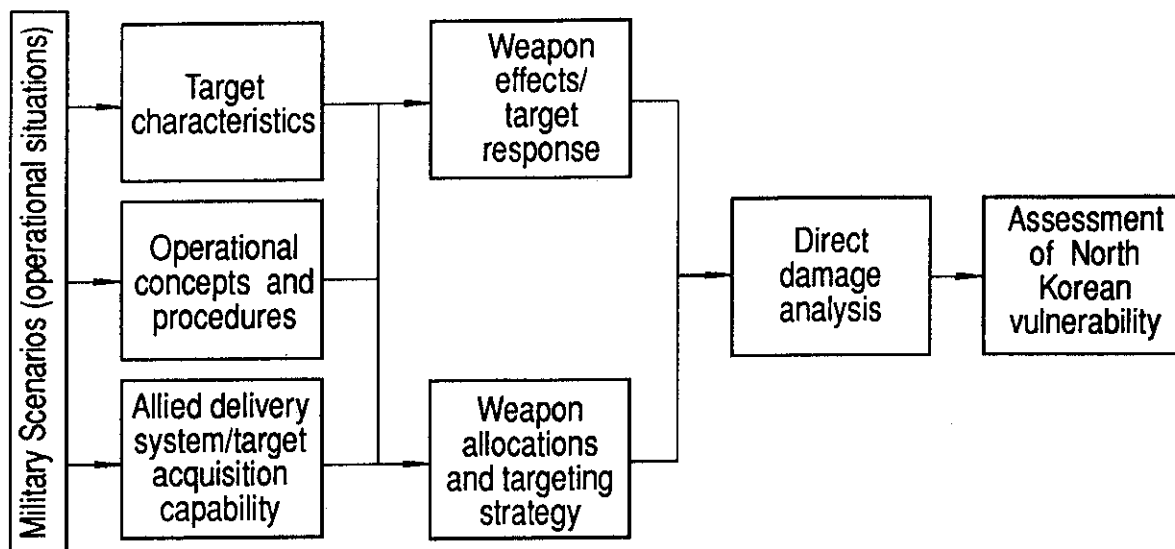
Table 4-1
North Korean Vulnerability to Nuclear Attack

Factor

- A. *Target Characteristics:*
 Number of each type of acquired or deduced target
 Target posture: fraction of personnel standing in open or prone in foxholes, weapon emplacements, armored personnel carriers, and tanks
 Time in position and vulnerability
 Size and distribution
 Level of shielding at each target
- B. *Delivery System Characteristics:*
 Response time and rate of fire
 Number of each type of delivery system
 System accuracy and warhead yield
 Allocation strategy
- C. *Operational Considerations:*
 Target location error (sensor performance, location and number of ground- and air-based sensors, frequency of observations, target time in position, cover and concealment at target)
 Selected level of target damage
 Command and control systems/procedures
- D. *Vulnerability Measures:*
 Nuclear resources expended against the division
 Number of combat arms units incapacitated by direct nuclear effects as a function of available resources
 Fraction of the functional area in the division destroyed in nuclear weapon laydown
 Number of incapacitated units per expended warhead
 Fraction of division destroyed per expended warhead
- E. *Constraints:*
 Permissible duration of firing times
 Allowable distance between nearby nuclear bursts
 Allowable warhead yields
 Friendly troop safety
 Weapon allocation and targeting strategy
-

Source: Science Applications, Inc., *Vulnerability of North Korean Forces, Evaluation of Vulnerability of North Korean Divisions to Tactical Nuclear Weapons*, vol. 1, report to U.S. Defense Nuclear Agency, DNA 4570F-1, McLean, Va., March 1978, pp. 1-3, 4, 2-21, 3-1, 18; released under a U.S. Freedom of Information Act request.

of forces engaged in conflict and identified the factors that either would constrain escalating to tactical nuclear war or would affect combat operations. Next, they added the characteristics of target units (for example, the number of personnel standing versus protected in vehicles or foxholes) to calculate the effects of radiation and blast on targets. What nuclear weapons are allocated to what targets depends in turn on the target array, the specified military objective of nuclear attack, and the priority accorded to arrays of targets, as well as the type of nuclear delivery system, the weapon yield, the rate of fire, accuracy of delivery, and the number of



Source: Science Applications, Inc., *Vulnerability of North Korean Forces, Evaluation of Vulnerability of North Korean Divisions to Tactical Nuclear Weapons*, vol. 1, report to U.S. Defense Nuclear Agency, DNA 4570F-1, McLean, Va., March 1987, p. 1-6; released under U.S. Freedom of Information Act Request.

Figure 4-1. Basic Structure of North Korean Vulnerability

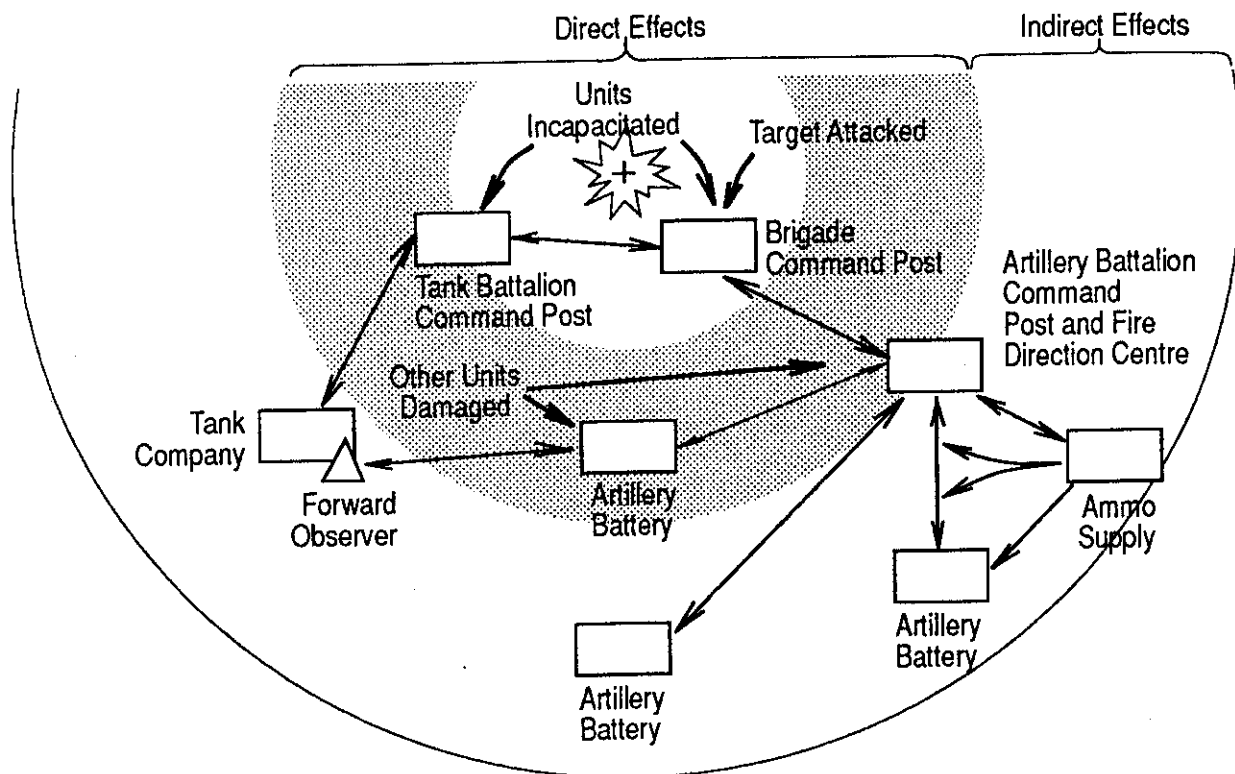
warheads. Given all this, SAI assessed the vulnerability of North Korean land forces to tactical nuclear attack.⁴⁸

Figure 4-2 illustrates the direct and indirect effects of nuclear attack on North Korean units analyzed in the SAI report. As might be expected, units close to ground zero would be incapacitated by direct and indirect effects and thereby rendered unavailable for military action. Units more distant from the nuclear explosion would be rendered merely degraded due to loss of some personnel or materiel, or impaired due to the interruption of support to surviving units.⁴⁹

SAI considered that North Korean units would be rendered “mission ineffective” if nuclear attack caused losses to 30 percent of their principal equipment such as tanks and howitzers, or to 40 percent of their personnel, or to 50 percent of their radios.⁵⁰

North Korean units “targeted” by SAI covered functional areas such as artillery, combat (maneuver) elements, command and control, air defense, and anti tank units. SAI developed target arrays composed of these units to examine, as they wrote, “the effects of variations in combat intensity, troop exposure, and deployment” on North Korean vulnerability to nuclear attack.⁵¹

Just as Johns Hopkins University found was the case in the Korean War, SAI discovered that it was still difficult to “acquire” quickly and accurately a nuclear target. They noted that the shape of the battlefield markedly influenced the South Koreans’ ability to acquire targets for nu-



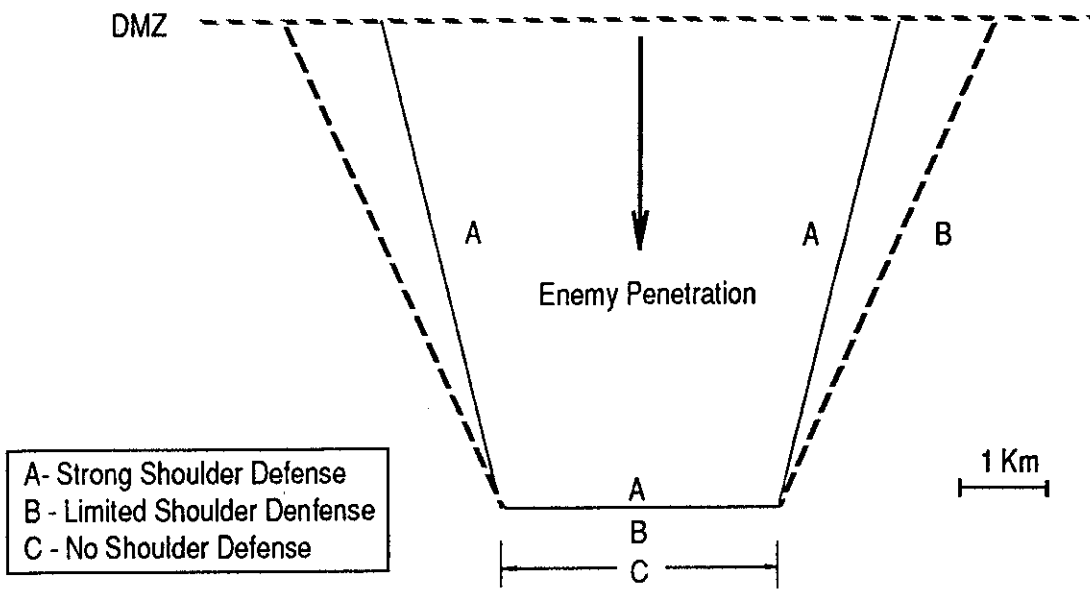
Source: Science Applications, Inc., *Vulnerability of North Korean Forces, Evaluation of Vulnerability of North Korean Divisions to Tactical Nuclear Weapons*, vol. 1, report to U.S. Defense Nuclear Agency, DNA 4570F-1, McLean, Va., March 1978, p. 1-9; released under a U.S. Freedom of Information Act Request.

Figure 4-2. Nuclear Effects on North Korean Combat Units

clear fire support. They suggested that of the three different battlefield configurations associated with potential North Korean penetration attacks (see figure 4-3), those providing strong shoulder defense would allow the best acquisition of nuclear targets. In both the shallow and deep North Korean attack scenarios, SAI assumed that South Korean forces would maintain a limited shoulder defense to slow attacking forces and to acquire nuclear targets.⁵²

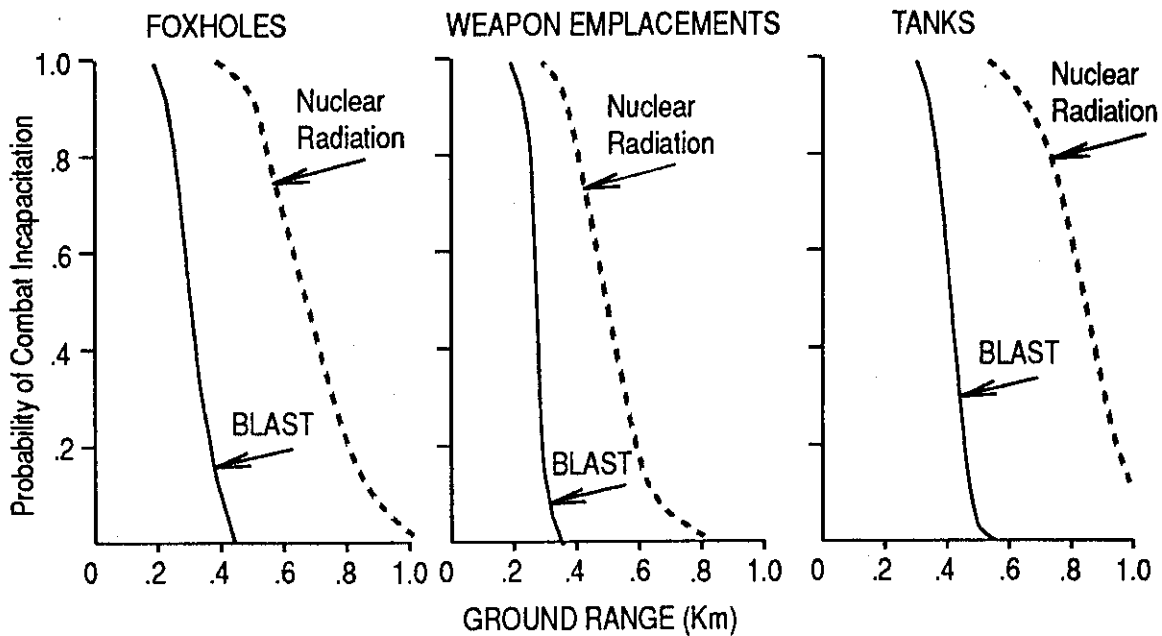
Not surprisingly, SAI concluded that nuclear artillery would be targeted mostly on the attacking North Korean combat units. North Korean armored units would advertise their location by attacking, permitting easy identification. Being at the front of the battlefield, these units also would be within easy reach of nuclear cannons.⁵³

SAI's mundane technical assessment of North Korean vulnerability was remarkable more for its neglect of political factors stressed by NATO than its military logic. SAI did recognize that protecting friendly forces would constrain nuclear attacks. It was totally insensitive, however, to the *political* problems of using large numbers of nuclear weapons against North Korean forces *in South Korea*—at least in the declassified portions of the study. Applying the destructive radii in figure 4-4 to the area



Source: Science Applications, Inc., *Vulnerability of North Korean Forces, Evaluation of Vulnerability of North Korean Divisions to Tactical Nuclear Weapons*, vol. 1, report to U.S. Defense Nuclear Agency, DNA 4570F-1, McLean, Va., March 1978, p. 2-25; released under a U.S. Freedom of Information Act Request.

Figure 4-3. Alternative Forward Edge of Battle Area Configurations



Combat incapacitation from 650 rads or 43 psi
 (Weapon = 10 kilotons; height of burst = 131 m., 1 hour after burst)

Source: Science Applications, Inc., *Vulnerability of North Korean Forces, Evaluation of Vulnerability of North Korean Divisions to Tactical Nuclear Weapons*, vol. 1, report to U.S. Defense Nuclear Agency, DNA 4570F-1, McLean, Va., March 1978, p. 3-22; released under U.S. Freedom of Information Act Request.

Figure 4-4. Influence of North Korean Unit Posture on Combat Incapacitation from Nuclear Attack

configuration of attacking north Korean forces in figure 4-3 suggests that SAI's strategy would result in at least thirty airburst nuclear weapons being fired in an area starting only 15 kilometers from Seoul!

The *geopolitical* premise of the SAI study was even more unrealistic. To argue persuasively that North Korea would attack at all, SAI postulated that Carter's election prompted China to become hostile toward the United States, and the Soviet Union to adopt a "steel curtain" approach to detente. "Thus," says SAI, "these two countries allied to North Korea gave the nod to the North Korean position of unification."⁵⁴ In fact, the Chinese and the Soviets have consistently indicated to Kim Il Sung that they do not support the violent reunification of Korea, a point made by American opponents to U.S. withdrawal.⁵⁵ And at the same time that SAI was arguing that China would unleash Kim Il Sung on the United States to justify the realism of tactical nuclear warfighting in Korea, army analysts were fighting Carter's withdrawal policy by arguing that China wanted to keep the United States in Korea for its own anti-Soviet objectives!⁵⁶

Consistency, however, is not the hallmark of ideology nor of narrow interest. In 1974 the militant and realpolitik currents were both converging on the policy of withdrawal from Korea, although from very different angles. Kissinger's policy threatened the army by substituting a navy-led Pacific policy for an army-led Asian policy. Kissinger supported withdrawal, but only *after* settlement of the Korean conflict by strategic diplomacy. He effectively blocked the short-term threat to the army's interest in Korea—that is, Schlesinger's effort to subordinate Korea to China in U.S. foreign policy.

But both policies represented a mortal threat to the army's position in Korea. In 1975 the army called in a team of strategic experts to advise it on how to handle the thorny issue of withdrawal from Korea. Their report gave an apocalyptic reading of the possible impact of withdrawal from Korea, arguing that it might result in the loss of U.S. basing privileges in the Philippines and Japan.⁵⁷ It recommended that the army fight partial withdrawal on the Schlesinger model as representing the thin end of the wedge. (Politically, this strategem meant arguing to proponents of militant containment during the Carter administration that the Chinese would lose confidence in the United States if it withdrew from Korea.) And it capitalized on the realpolitik argument that total withdrawal was premature before a great-power settlement was achieved that recognized the division of Korea into two nations.

While it was obvious by late 1974 that Kissinger's realpolitik had saved the army from withdrawal by the militant current, the report pointed out that withdrawal was now on the agenda:

The basic question of force withdrawal, however, cannot lightly be dismissed. "If not now, when?" will be a recurring question. Precipitate total withdrawal currently seems to have sufficient grounds for its being ruled out. Partial withdrawal, although . . . having a lesser overall and immediate adverse impact than total withdrawal, does suffer one nearly fatal flaw, that is, it is an equivocation of U.S. will, an attempt to maintain U.S. credibility by taking only a half-measure of retrenchment. A nation with the power and responsibility which the United States has cannot exercise them on the cheap. Either it exhibits a forthright will to defend its interests and honor its commitments or it surrenders its place among the great powers which shape the world's events. Partial withdrawal is an attempt to avoid this choice. All of this is to say, then, that for policy purposes, the judgement derived from analysis of the question is that the status quo ought to be maintained until total withdrawal is feasible.⁵⁸

And indeed, the withdrawal issue was quickly revived by Carter whose internationalist bent and political fortunes were wedded to isolationist impulses in American society. This time, it took the fury of both the militant and the realpolitik currents to turn back the tide of withdrawal, saving yet again the army's hide in Korea.

5

Plot

Korea is now even more than before the radical turn of events in Southeast Asia the critically important anchor of the U.S. posture in Asia.

—Report to U.S. Army, 1975¹

The first sign that incoming President Carter might rock the boat in East Asia was his speech to the Trilateral Commission in Tokyo in May 1975. Although it went unnoticed, Carter mentioned the option of withdrawing from Korea. Reportedly, Zbigniew Brzezinski influenced this speech, made a fortnight after the fall of Saigon.

Carter's electoral team sought ways to demarcate their candidate from President Ford. Highlighting withdrawal from Korea was an easy way to ride on the post-Vietnam wave of liberal isolationist sentiment. In April 1975, a Harris poll, for example, showed that only 14 percent of Americans asked were in favor of U.S. involvement if North Korea attacked the south, while 65 percent would oppose it.² All of the foreign policy subcommittees in the U.S. House of Representatives also favored partial or total withdrawal from Korea. Only the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee held it necessary to keep some U.S. military in Korea.³

Carter was also looking for support from fiscal conservatives concerned with burden sharing and liberals worried about automatic escalation from Korea to nuclear war. Some insiders speculate that Carter was influenced personally by firsthand missionary accounts of the human rights atrocities in South Korea. Others believe that he was simply following his advisers. Cyrus Vance, for example, told Carter in October 1976 that "Korea remains a trouble spot that can explode at any moment. . . I believe that it is correct to work toward the withdrawal of U.S. ground forces on a phased basis."⁴ Many cynical advisers assumed that Carter would drop the pledge if elected.

In fact, within a few days of being sworn in, Carter ordered that U.S. ground forces be withdrawn from Korea by 1980, jolting the entire national security establishment. It signaled that Carter was riding the trilateralist rather than containment policy current. Whether they were from the militant or realpolitik schools of containment, the established national

security apparatchiks were aghast at the trilateralists' global managerialism.

Trilateralists appointed by Carter stressed economic interdependence, diplomacy, and arms control rather than containment and military force. They also gave Europe priority over Asia, further alienating vested interests in the containment policy current.⁵

This chapter discloses the inside story of how interests in keeping the United States committed to a policy of militant containment in Korea made common cause against Carter's withdrawal policy. It recounts the first public debate in the United States over U.S. nuclear strategy in Korea which took place as the Carter administration took office, determined to revise the policy of militant containment and to dismantle the army's nuclear domain in Korea.

The chapter reveals how the State Department, concerned primarily about Japan, led the charge and manipulated the bureaucratic process to change Carter's mind. It shows how the U.S. army was able to shape the debate by activating other, nonmilitary interests in support of their cause. It concludes by examining how the way in which Carter chose to wrestle with these interests unleashed an unprecedented military arms race in Korea.

PRM-13

To start his ball rolling, in January 1977 Carter sent Vice President Walter Mondale to Japan, but *not* to South Korea for consultations. The South Koreans viewed his trip as a calculated snub, especially when it became known that he had summoned Frank Underhill, by now U.S. ambassador to Malaysia, to join him. Underhill was known widely to be a proponent of military disengagement from South Korea. Mondale did not ask Richard Sneider, ambassador to South Korea, to join him.⁶

Even before Mondale's trip, the ambassador-designate to South Korea, William Gleysteen, was writing the first drafts of the presidential review memorandum 13, or PRM 13, the document whereby the executive branch, as one State Department participant put it, "saluted and said, 'yes sir!'"⁷ The Pentagon viewed PRM 13 as particularly infamous because the State Department "rolled over" and refused to put any option to the president that confronted his decision.

In fact, PRM 13 only addressed how to implement the policy. Carter's secretary of state, Cyrus Vance, instructed the drafting officers that they were only to consider whether the withdrawal would be immediate or slow, with a buildup of bases and forces to allow re-entry of U.S. forces to Korea. There was also an annex on nuclear weapons.

To reassure South Korea, Carter dispatched George Brown, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs, and Philip Habib, an under secretary of state, to visit Seoul. President Park accepted the five-year withdrawal plan proposed in the PRM but asked that the United States reaffirm its treaty commitment, compensate South Korea with increased military aid, and leave behind its tactical nuclear weapons as a significant deterrent. On the latter issue, the two Americans were noncommittal, citing the need for further review.⁸

In fact, a cabal of Carter appointees in the State Department and the Pentagon believed that keeping nuclear weapons in Korea was imprudent. At one meeting held in the State Department, they even considered withdrawing the weapons clandestinely leaving behind a fake stockpile. They quickly concluded that such a ploy would not work because the South Korean security guards would notice changes in the behavior of U.S. guards if mock nuclear weapons or trainers were substituted for real ones.⁹ The Joint Chiefs reportedly put a stop to such talk by threatening to attack the proposal in public.¹⁰

Park's request to leave tactical nuclear weapons behind was also unappealing. Officials at the State Department and the Pentagon believed that leaving nuclear weapons without substantial forces could only invite North Korean attack while forgoing the ostensible deterrence effects of nuclear-capable forces.

After review at the Interagency Policy Review Committee, chaired by Cyrus Vance on April 21, 1977, the slowest possible withdrawal option in PRM 13 was adopted by a majority at the April 27 meeting of the U.S. National Security Council. At the same meeting, however, Carter overruled them and chose a plan for a staged withdrawal to be completed by 1980. On May 5, Carter issued a presidential directive (PD/NSC-12) on troop withdrawal.¹¹ Carter's decision to withdraw the Second Infantry Division implied that the United States had decided to remove its nuclear weapons—at least those involving ground forces. PRM 13 reportedly assumed that most if not all the nuclear weapons would be pulled out.¹²

By 1978 withdrawal was in full swing. Lower levels of the executive branch were working loyally to implement it. "By then," said one official, "either you were used to it, or you couldn't get used to it."

Public Debate on Nuclear Weapons

As might be expected, the troop withdrawal policy evoked a response in policy circles in Washington. In fact, public debate on nuclear strategy in Korea had begun in 1974 in the United States when a House Appropriations Committee called for decisive action "to reduce the risks of auto-

matic combat involvement and to minimize the possibility of nuclear war." The committee further urged that the army's Fourth Missile Command, still armed with nuclear-tipped missiles introduced in 1958, return to the United States.¹³

The currents in Congress and the State Department threatened to sweep the army out of Korea. The effect of the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Korea, the army's strategic advisers informed it in a 1975 secret report, "cannot fail to be considerable on both allies and adversaries."¹⁴ They asserted that it would damage South Korea's confidence in the U.S. defense commitment:

The removal of nuclear weapons would represent to South Koreans a diminution of U.S. determination to discharge its security obligation. The removal would be interpreted as a change in combat operational requirement, tending to reduce the military capability of the South, but even greater than the perceived impact on military capability would be the psychological and political impact. To South Koreans, the removal of nuclear weapons would probably signify a clear erosion of U.S. will regarding the defense of South Korea.¹⁵

They further noted that if nuclear weapons *were* to be removed from South Korea, then it should be done secretly to avoid controversy in Japan and to "leave some residual question of their presence in the minds of North Korean leaders."¹⁶

After Carter's election, more information began to enter the public debate. Political scientist Franklin Weinstein joined the fray by arguing that nuclear weapons in Korea should be withdrawn because they were unnecessary, easily replaced by offshore forces, and unusable in Korea in any case.¹⁷

The U.S. military itself was divided on the nuclear issue. Privately, some officers felt that the nuclear weapons were militarily irrelevant and created political headaches.¹⁸ Others argued that the United States and South Korea were outmanned and outgunned by North Korea and that nuclear weapons were necessary to balance the books.¹⁹ Replying to the argument that the weapons were unusable, however, former U.S. commander in Korea Gen. Richard Stilwell argued,

This has never been—nor is it today—the view of the uniformed military chain of command charged with the defense of South Korea. Of equal importance is the role of forward deployed nuclear delivery systems in deterrence. The value [of nuclear weapons] in Korea is identical with Western Europe.²⁰

Added Stilwell, "Encamped between the demilitarized zone and any logi-

cal military objectives, he [the U.S. ground soldier] constitutes the real earnest of U.S. investment in deterrence.”²¹ For the army, “trip wire” ground troops were indissolubly linked to nuclear weapons. Having nuclear weapons in Korea thus became central to preserving the Army’s main interest in Korea, its ground troops.

“Three Cassandras”

By late 1977, Carter’s withdrawal policy seemed unstoppable. One battalion of 2,600 troops departed Korea in April 1978. Carter’s closest advisers were committed to his policy. His national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, was the strongest proponent of pullout and virtually the sole senior supporter of Carter’s policy.²² Philip Habib, former ambassador in Seoul who was known as the administration’s “Mr. Korea,” held the powerful post of under secretary of State for political affairs. He had served as the president’s envoy to Seoul in early 1977 to explain the policy and was a Vance man. He reportedly simply no longer believed that the United States needed ground troops in South Korea. Brzezinski, Vance, and Habib made a formidable coalition backing the president’s policy for the first year.²³

In reality, however, a countercurrent was swirling deep in the bureaucracy. Arrayed against the loyalists were Morton Abramowitz and Michael Armacost in the Pentagon, and Richard Holbrooke in the State Department, who became Vance’s point man on Korea.

Holbrooke entered the State Department agnostic on the issue of Korea. It did not take him long, though, to realize that the Carter administration already had a full agenda in East Asia. It was engaged in difficult negotiations over the Philippine bases and normalizing relations with China. The impact on Japan of withdrawal from Korea would be unhelpful. Nor could he see how withdrawal from Korea would save money due to the investment in airlift required to reintroduce the Second Division.

Brzezinski, on the other hand, was a globalist out of the Nixon-Kissinger mold of hard-line realpolitik. Whereas Vance wanted to treat each alliance on its own merits in a bilateral context, Brzezinski and his lieutenants in the National Security Council, such as Michael Oxenberg, were interested primarily in the strategic logic of the global, great-power triangle. For Brzezinski, withdrawal from Korea was consistent with militarizing the relationship with China. Indeed, they reportedly even considered it possible to persuade North Korea to abandon its alliance with the Soviet Union and to join an anti-Soviet bloc in East Asia.

Vance and the army, however, feared that withdrawal would undermine China’s confidence in the U.S. commitment to East Asia while

jeopardizing the Soviets' support for SALT II. Even worse, it would signal to U.S. allies such as Japan and South Korea that they were now less important to the United States than China. At a more venal, commercial level, the State Department was also pushed hard by the powerful but ailing domestic nuclear industry to use strategic muscle to gain advantage in the highly competitive South Korean nuclear reactor market in 1978-79.²⁴

"Luckily," Vance wrote later, "the depth of the disagreement within the executive branch never became public, although there were a few flurries."²⁵

Confronted by the growing opposition, Brzezinski said, "You are my three Cassandras. You're trying to make the president flip-flop."

Holbrooke orchestrated the bureaucratic plot that upended the policy. He coordinated closely with Morton Abramowitz, the head of International Security Affairs (the Pentagon's little State Department). Also on board were Michael Armacost, deputy assistant secretary for the Pentagon's East Asia Bureau; Gen. David Jones, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs; and later, Cyrus Vance and Harold Brown. Leslie Gelb supported Holbrooke from the Politico-Military Affairs Office of the State Department. Holbrooke also worked closely with Senators Sam Nunn, John Glenn, and Gary Hart to bring over powerful Democratic party military reformers to oppose Carter's policy.

Holbrooke kept his allies on a short leash. He had a tight understanding with the army and with key congressmen, Glenn and Nunn. He told them they had to give the men around Carter time to bring him around. As a result, there were virtually no leaks after the initial round of media exposés in the aftermath of Carter's election. Far from indicating that the opponents were vanquished, the lack of a single media leak signaled that the opponents were unified. "If you give me running room," Holbrooke told his allies, "we can turn it around. If you go on the warpath, we'll have a catastrophe."

Holbrooke had little difficulty in persuading the military to let him make the running. They had already openly tackled the president on Korea and lost. In January 1977—before Carter had recommitted himself to his campaign pledge—the Joint Chiefs tested the political waters. In their annual posture statement to Congress, they publicly opposed the pullout, saying that U.S. troops in Korea were vital to Northeast Asian stability and security. On March 7, 1977, they responded to the draft of PRM 13. With the concurrence of the commanding general in Korea, they recommended to Defense Secretary Harold Brown that the policy be watered down to a partial, phased reduction of seven thousand troops up to 1982, with ongoing review. Carter overrode them, declaring a couple of days later, and only a few hours before meeting with South Korean

president Park Chung Hee in Washington, that he would fulfill his campaign pledge to withdraw U.S. ground troops over four to five years.²⁶

Loose Cannon

In mid-May 1977 Gen. John Singlaub, then chief of staff of U.S. Forces Korea, allowed himself to be “mousetrapped” by the *Washington Post* into stating that “if we withdraw our ground forces on the schedule suggested, it will lead to war.”²⁷ Carter swiftly reprimanded the rebel. (Singlaub later became a leading figure in proto-fascist private military circles revolving around the Irangate scandal.) Although the Singlaub incident allowed Carter to assert that he was in control, in reality Singlaub was a loose cannon on the opponents’ deck. His attack on the president embarrassed the major players opposing the pullout policy. Thereafter, the radical right, such as former Korea commander Gen. Richard Stilwell, had no public influence over events. “They had no subtlety” said one high-level opponent of Carter’s policy. “They saw it as black and white, Carter is a sellout agent. We didn’t need them.”

Rather than using Singlaub’s crude tactics, these players resorted to the time-honored bureaucratic technique of reversing policy by subverting its implementation. The first step on the long road of reversal was to dry the bureaucratic gunpowder for the internal shootouts that lay ahead. The military and civilian intelligence agencies had already begun revising their assessments of the North Korean threat as analysts were released from the Vietnam War effort. The August 1976 incident prompted additional pre-election studies. The most important was that by the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency which dramatically increased the estimated number of North Korean tanks.²⁸

Smoking Gun

PRM 13 had authorized further study of the Korean situation. The reassessment by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency—the “liberals” in the Washington intelligence community—was especially influential because it confirmed estimates made by hard-line agencies such as the Defense Intelligence Agency. The CIA increased sharply its estimate of North Korean military forces and shortened the warning time of North Korean attack. “We had the smoking gun we needed,” said one former State Department official. “We worked this continuously with Defense.”

The executive opponents needed Congress, but on their terms. A par-

tisan attack could only strengthen the President's policy. For the first year, interested congressional aides found themselves shut out of the administration's decision making. In early 1977, however, Sen. John Glenn took up withdrawal. Glenn had been a marine pilot in Korea. He also chaired the important East Asia Pacific Subcommittee in the Senate.

Glenn quickly started working the issue on the Hill. Glenn wanted someone credible from the liberal wing of the party to examine the issue. He approached Hubert Humphrey, who fitted the bill. Glenn and Humphrey made a series of trips to Korea and Japan, and the subcommittee hired a retired marine general to study the military balance in Korea.

At first, the administration gave little information to the Hill. In part, the executive was denying information to hinder congressional opposition. By year's end, as Holbrooke began his campaign, Glenn was making headway on the Hill, having found a new ally in Sam Nunn, who, with Bill Cohen, accompanied Glenn on yet another trip to Korea.

Throughout the congressional campaign against the policy, the Pentagon scrupulously abided by its agreement with Holbrooke to leave the running to insiders appointed by Carter. According to a senior former congressional aide, only one person in the Pentagon consistently passed helpful, accurate information to the opponents of reversal. The military did not try to exert informal influence on the Hill. There was no need to. "State was always trying to position itself between DOD and the Hill on the Korea withdrawal issue," said one former congressional staffer. "Lord knows," he added, "I tried to create a coalition with DOD."

There was some support in Congress for Carter's policy. Liberal Democratic senators such as George McGovern defended withdrawal. Supporters, however, were diffuse and politically ineffective. They were generally considerably farther to the left than Carter himself on U.S. foreign policy in the Far East. Congressman Ron Dellums, for example, argued against the withdrawal on populist grounds:

In this instance, the question for the American people is, are you willing to kill the North Koreans, are you willing to die for the South Koreans? It is my opinion at this particular moment the American people are not prepared to engage in war in Korea. It is my belief that American people if asked the question, are you prepared to kill the North Koreans, the answer would be no. Are you prepared to kill for the South Koreans, I believe the American people also would answer no.²⁹

Dellums also denounced Singlaub's appearance before congressional hearings into the withdrawal as yet another "congressional charade" designed to embarrass the president.³⁰

Carter's defenders were unable to block the conservatives in Congress. In April 1978 the House Armed Services Committee issued its first broad-

side attack on Carter's withdrawal policy. Its report criticized not only the substantive policy, but also the manner in which it had been formulated and implemented.

On April 21, 1978, Carter attempted to mollify his critics by issuing the first adjustment to the pullout schedule, slowing the rate of removal. By now, however, opponents in Congress had momentum that could not be halted so easily. Republican senator Percy told Glenn that he could line up Republican opposition with the Democrats.

At the end of 1978, Carter had obtained from Congress all the legislation needed to implement the pullout, including appropriations for compensatory military aid to South Korea. But in January 1979, Sen. Gary Hart switched positions to oppose withdrawal—a major blow to Carter, who expected Hart to hold firm.³¹ The Senate Armed Services Committee recommended dropping withdrawal altogether in its January 23, 1979, report, which was adopted overwhelmingly by the whole Senate. A series of obviously orchestrated leaks of revised intelligence estimates appeared in the press (starting with the private *Army Times*) in early 1979. These reports purported to show that past estimates had greatly underrated the North Korean military threat. The Senate attack and the media treatment prompted Carter in February 1979 to promise to reevaluate withdrawal. He hoped thereby to divert criticism of normalizing relations with China.³² Informed insiders in Washington believed that total abandonment of withdrawal was only a matter of time.³³

Tough Guy Waffles

By now Brzezinski was distinctly uncomfortable with withdrawal. The policy hurt his image on other fronts. "He was meant to be the tough guy," said a former official, "while State was meant to be weak. Here he was looking the weak guy while State looked tough."

Yet Brzezinski did not help the opponents. Unlike Harold Brown and Cyrus Vance, he waffled rather than taking a firm stand against withdrawal. Brzezinski also knew that there was more than one way to skin a cat. He had to stop Carter from being boxed in, keeping room for maneuver until he could bring him over. He did nothing, therefore, to block the consensus that was developing among senior policymakers that somehow the policy had to be reversed.

Carter's lieutenants decided in mid-1978 that the only way to get the president to review his decision was to use all the resources of the bureaucracy to scour out the foundations of the policy. The normal method in such cases was to produce another boring bureaucratic document with a hidden agenda. This time it was called presidential review memorandum 45, known to insiders as the "turnaround PRM."

PRM 45

Nicholas Platt at the National Security Council was in charge of PRM 45.³⁴ The fact that Asia policy was a low priority in the Eurocentric Carter administration made it easy for a low-ranking official like Platt to push the seemingly innocuous decision to conduct PRM 45 through the NSC's Policy Review Committee. The State Department's ubiquitous Richard Holbrooke, the Pentagon's Michael Armacost, the NSC's China expert, Michael Oxenberg, and Platt were the main players who formulated PRM 45. Although the State Department's Policy Planning Committee was not a big player, its East Asia expert Tony Lake sat in on the meetings.

Robert Rich at the State Department actually drafted the document in the latter half of 1978 and first half of 1979. Unlike the intelligence reports aimed at firing up congressional pressure on Carter, PRM 45 was aimed directly at the president rather than at some other faction in the bureaucracy. For this reason, it was never leaked to the press.

This inside group developed a three-part bureaucratic strategy. First was PRM 45. Second, the Pentagon prepared a concurrent big study of the interactive military balance in Korea, to be included as an annex to the PRM. The process was to culminate in the third and most crucial component, a trip by the president to the region.

The bureaucratic logic was for PRM 45 to be submitted to the NSC's Policy Review Committee, chaired by Brzezinski. There the key players were Brzezinski, Vance, Brown, and the head of the CIA. From the committee, the PRM would go to a small committee, including the cabinet-level policymakers above the NSC but excluding the president. Only then would the president be consulted on the review. The cabal planned that before Carter announced that withdrawal was to be put in abeyance, he would consult with allies on a trip to the Far East. The trip was carefully planned to win over Carter. They anticipated that the trip to Korea would force Carter to bite the bullet. Upon return, he would consult with Congress and then announce the reversal.

"You have to bear in mind," said one conspirator in this plan, "that the purpose of all this was to change one man's mind."

Three Stage Rocket

PRM 45 was constructed like a three-stage rocket. Each stage was dependent on the others, in a layered fashion. The booster rocket was a formal Special National Intelligence Estimate by the CIA on North Korea's military capabilities. This study drew on the preceding year of work by the

intelligence community. The next stage was the military annex to PRM 45 written by the Pentagon. It attempted to take the CIA's static beancounts and to make them dynamic in terms of north-south relative capabilities projected into the medium term, with and without U.S. troops in Korea. It was here that the military analysts were able to tilt the "balance" with subjective judgments, even though the "static" information on which these judgments were based was reportedly unbiased by the political goals of the whole exercise.

Atop the whole edifice came the PRM itself. The third stage presented the political and geopolitical environment, U.S. interests, the views of allies, the major issues, and the pros and cons of various options for the NSC to review. "The Pentagon," said one participant in the PRM, "wanted to throw in other issues: the force structures, military assistance, which weapons systems to be provided in which financial year, everything but the kitchen sink. We ended up with troop withdrawal and nuclear weapons."

With draft in hand, Rich flew to Seoul and passed it by Commander in Korea General John Vessey and U.S. Ambassador William Gleysteen. The consultations in Seoul took two days over long, working breakfasts, after which Vessey and Gleysteen worked on the draft with their staff.

The NSC Policy Review Committee met to discuss PRM 45 three times. The players reportedly were all very much on top of the issues. Korea was one of the hotter potatoes in the national security establishment.

Starting in early June, the opponents began to leak reports that Carter would suspend the troop pullout on his visit to the Far East.³⁵ Just before Carter left for the Far East, the Joint Chiefs formally requested Carter to suspend the troop pullout, raising expectations in Seoul that he would announce the reversal on the visit.³⁶

Damage Control

On June 30, 1979, President Carter visited South Korea. He set himself the difficult task of supporting the alliance and at the same time distancing himself from the human rights transgressions of his host, the Park Chung Hee regime. After spending the night with U.S. troops at Camp Casey, about 12 kilometers south of the demilitarized zone, he drove to Seoul to meet with President Park at the Blue House.³⁷

The meeting began with advisers present. Park began by lecturing Carter on the immorality of withdrawing from Korea. His manner so upset Carter that he wrote a note to Vance that read "If he continues this I'm gonna take'em all out."

"I could feel the contained anger of the President," Vance recalled later, "but there was nothing to be done but let the drama play itself out."³⁸

Carter's minders decided to try a one-on-one meeting between the presidents. Accompanied only by translators and one adviser, the two presidents talked mostly about the military situation and human rights, but avoided withdrawal. Carter was extremely tense, his jaw snapping and his eyes popping. For his part, Park was snapping his fingers as he was wont to do under pressure.

After the frosty meeting between the two presidents, Carter drove back to the U.S. ambassador's compound in central Seoul a few hundred yards from the ancient Toksugung Palace. He traveled in an enormous old black limo, which carried six or seven passengers. In the limo with Carter were Harold Brown, secretary of defense, Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser; Cyrus Vance, secretary of state; and William Gleysteen, U.S. ambassador to South Korea. The driver in the front could not hear the discussions with the window closed. Nicholas Platt, Korea desk officer at the National Security Council, and Richard Holbrooke, under secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific, chased the limo in a small car.

It pulled up in front of the residence and stopped. A traffic jam built up behind for blocks. Nobody got out. Ten minutes went by. Still nobody got out. Holbrooke, Platt, and Robert Rich, Korea desk officer at the State Department, waited a discreet distance from the car, able to see in but hear nothing of the discussions.

Inside the car, the president turned to each of his most senior advisers. He asked them, "Do you disagree with my policy?" One after another they said, "Yes, Mr. President." At first only Gleysteen told the president to his face why his policy was wrong, but soon Brown and Vance joined the fray.³⁹

The rest of the day was spent in damage control, trying to recover from the disastrous presidential meeting. That evening, Carter told Park that he would look into withdrawal closely when he got back to the United States. At the instigation of the South Korean Ministry of Defense, the joint communiqué issued at the end of meeting reaffirmed that the U.S. nuclear umbrella still covered South Korea.⁴⁰

Walking Back the Cat

The original plot hatched by Holbrooke envisaged Carter returning to Washington resigned to PRM 45 and shifting focus to the Hill before making the final announcement. As it happened, this procedure was abbreviated because Carter was swamped with economic problems upon his

return. The wily bureaucrats were not upset to find themselves consulting Congress on Carter's behalf and with his authority without being encumbered by the president himself.

The nuclear issue resurfaced in 1979 when the U.S. National Security Council reviewed PRM 45. That document treated nuclear weapons as symbolically rather than militarily important. In particular, NSC officials thought that keeping nuclear weapons in Korea would show Japan that the U.S. nuclear umbrella still covered East Asia. The NSC decided to keep nuclear weapons in Korea, except for those withdrawn in the course of routine modernization and housekeeping. Keeping the troops led to reverse linkage with nuclear weapons, to keep the weapons with the forces.

The council reportedly did not consider the strategic or operational implications of nuclear deployments in Korea. Staff in Assistant Secretary of Defense Walter Slocombe's office considered doing another study on the nuclear issue. But their interest died a bureaucratic death, as no one, including the president, was pushing for nuclear withdrawal. Once the decision had been taken to leave the nuclear weapons, the only question was whether they would be air delivered or ground delivered. They opted for both.

In late summer 1979 Brzezinski signed off formally on PRM 45. Although the final announcement bore Carter's signature, it was Brzezinski who on July 20, 1979, read it to the press. Justifying the decision, he cited the Soviet and North Korean threat.

In fact, the decision had little to do with military factors, which merely provided a convenient excuse for public consumption. The major motivation was to preserve the United States' reputation. Thus Brzezinski also underscored the U.S. commitment to East Asian security relations and the United States' tilt toward China in the great-power triangle.⁴¹ He did not mention nuclear weapons. The nuclear part of the new policy was never made public.

In fact, even after year of debate and the PRM, Carter was still grasping at straws to preserve the remnants of his policy. PRM 45 presented a range of options to the NSC, from sticking to the planned withdrawal to total reversal of withdrawal. Carter finally chose the option preferred by the bureaucracy: halting the withdrawal except for housekeeping consolidations, such as the missile battery to be turned over to the South Koreans. The president never decided directly on the retention of nuclear weapons in Korea. The advisers decreed that nuclear weapons were to remain.

Carter insisted that the situation be reassessed in 1981 when a new review would be conducted. By then, of course, the radical right had swept into power with Ronald Reagan. They had their own agenda in Korea, and the review was canceled.

By the end of 1978, Carter's foreign policy was on the defensive on the home front. Withdrawal from Korea was a cheap bone for Carter to throw to conservative wolves, to keep them from savaging more important U.S. interests such as ratifying SALT II and normalizing relations with China. While cool heads in Congress quickly prevailed over the ideologues who wanted to fight Carter's decision to dump the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Treaty, Carter was unable to push SALT II through Congress. In short, he sacrificed his Korea policy for naught.

Undeniably, militant containment had won out against *realpolitik* in Korea and isolationism at home. "It took us two and a half years," said one official, "to walk the cat back."

Rearguard Action

When it became clear in early 1978 that the withdrawal policy would be reversed, Carter appointees, led by Lynn Davis in the Pentagon, tried to delink the nuclear issue from the troop presence. One approach considered was to draw down the nuclear stockpile to only a few token weapons. "Token" would have meant maybe six artillery and one ADM nuclear weapon.

"We concluded that South Korea was a nice place and all that," said one of the participants at the Pentagon, "but the stakes were just not worth risks like those we were taking in Europe." The flurry of attention soon subsided, however. The issue died in the bureaucracy which had been diverted to European and Soviet issues in late 1978. Recollects one high-level participant in these discussions, "People steeped in nuclear policy saw nuclear issues in Korea as nonsense and peripheral."

About two-thirds of the pre-1977 arsenal, mostly the surface-air missiles and artillery shells, were reportedly moved by 1977, with the Carter administration planning to remove all nuclear weapons by 1982. The arsenal reportedly fell to about twenty nuclear weapons in 1979, before the incoming Reagan administration boosted it back to the "hundreds" in the early 1980s.

During the debate over withdrawal, Carter appointees worried about the escalation risks of U.S. first use in Korea found it hard to communicate their concerns to the military. They found that the military looked to nuclear weapons to "balance the books" in Korea by beefing up conventional defenses. Their preference for nuclear warfighting for compellence was coupled with a belief that unilateral U.S. nuclear attack against North Korea was feasible because the target state, unlike European adversaries, was not nuclear armed. Senior officials opposed to troop withdrawal were themselves convinced that the political and military risks of keeping nu-

clear weapons in Korea were too great. The military's views only increased their conviction that nuclear weapons should be removed from Korea.

Ironically, these skeptics included key leaders of the opposition to withdrawal, including Holbrooke and Schlesinger. Although the military had let the State Department lead the charge against Carter's policy, they still influenced its outcome by setting the tone. At the 1978 Team Spirit exercise, for example, the military conducted a simulated launch of Lance missiles imported to South Korea for the occasion. An official military journal later reported that Lance, "designed as a nuclear-tipped ground-to-ground weapon, was brought into the exercise to demonstrate the flexibility of its deployment."⁴² Local papers highlighted the ostentatious display of the Lance missiles. Just in case the North Koreans did not get the point, they noted that the Lance missile is nuclear-capable.⁴³ The previous year, the Pentagon had revealed that a small unit of B-52s was "continuing trimonthly practice flights over South Korea."⁴⁴

This kind of macho symbolism by the military made it politically impossible for opponents of troop withdrawal to argue for nuclear withdrawal. Thus, the military preserved the linkage between troop deployment and nuclear deployment. "If you took a strong position for deployment of nukes," said one State Department opponent of troop withdrawal, "you were tough on Communism. If you argued for redeployment, you were portrayed as weak."

In this manner, nuclear weapons became inseparable from the broader commitment to South Korea's defense. Thus, at the end of the 1978 U.S.—South Korean Security Consultation, Defense Secretary Harold Brown reiterated that the U.S. nuclear umbrella covered South Korea, although he did not mention nuclear weapons in Korea.⁴⁵ Yet again, practitioners of realpolitik in Korea had been outmaneuvered and outgunned by interests served by a policy of militant containment implemented with nuclear threats. The old policy current was blowing a frigid wind into U.S. politics, presaging the second cold war.⁴⁶

In fact, the only nuclear weapons removed from Korea during the Carter administration were the Sergeant and Honest John missiles. In both cases, the weapons in Korea were the last active units of their type in the Army.⁴⁷ In the case of the Honest Johns, the army had decided to deactivate them in 1976, before Carter's election.⁴⁸ For all their concern about avoiding automatic involvement in a Korean war, therefore, Carter's appointees hardly affected the army's nuclear strategy in South Korea.

The civilian trilateralists and liberals appointed by Carter never challenged the credibility of U.S. nuclear strategy in Korea. Instead, they fell back on the American experience in the Korean War.

There, the American experience had been that war in Korea was

confined to the Korean peninsula. Proponents of militant containment in Korea took solace in that lesson. If there is another war, they asked, why should it be any different? "No one was thinking of taking the war to the Yalu again," said one. "Based on the last Korean war," he added, "there's no risk of fighting the Soviet Union in Korea or offshore. It's just not in the Soviets' interests to get into a war over Korea."

This touching faith in Soviet prudence was matched by the belief that allied forces could hold the line in Korea with conventional weapons. As a corollary, pronuclear hardliners justified nuclear weapons in Korea not in terms of compellence and warfighting, but as reassuring the South Koreans in peacetime and deterring North Koreans in crises. They simply ignored the military's contrary view that nuclear weapons were needed in Korea to buttress conventional deterrence by threat *and* for compellence by warfighting, whatever the resulting absurdities or contradictions.

Even when the withdrawal was under way, they resurrected nuclear deterrence as a matter of policy. With North Korea specifically in mind, for example, State Department officials carefully crafted the wording of the U.S. resolution on first use at the 1978 UN Special Session on Disarmament so as not to "undercut" nuclear deterrence.⁴⁹

Failing to ask the right questions, senior U.S. officials never found the right answers. As a result, a meaningful debate on nuclear withdrawal from Korea within the administration never occurred. Nuclear issues were simply treated as adjuncts to broader strategic options, never in relation to their intrinsic importance. Nuclear weapons became the army's last line of defense against Carter's attempt to dismantle its domain in Korea. In short, bureaucratic momentum led to the deployment of nuclear weapons in Korea in 1958. Bureaucratic interest and inertia explains why they remained after 1978.

Part II
**“Neither Confirm
nor Deny”**

6

Airland Battle

There was no nuclear doctrine or rationale for Korea. They were just another weapon. The military is attached to a sort of mindless organizational chart. If you have a division, you have nuclear weapons. It's that simple. They would feel naked if they were in Korea without nuclear weapons.

—Former State Department official, November 16, 1987

Donning a khaki flak jacket, President Reagan visited the demilitarized zone in 1983—dubbed “freedom’s frontier” by the military’s public relations people. The Pentagon enlisted South Korea in Reagan’s global anti-Soviet crusade, openly linking the presence of U.S. troops in Korea to an “external” Soviet threat. The Reagan administration was a throwback to the Asia Firsters of an earlier year and placed a high priority on Asia. As Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger put it, “The defense efforts of Japan, China, and Korea have the potential to affect the global balance of power more profoundly perhaps than those of any other countries in the world, outside the United States and the Soviet Union.”¹

The Reagan administration quickly reinstated and expanded military aid, and modernized U.S. forces in Korea with new artillery, antitank weapons, and advanced missiles, along with a squadron of A-10 counter-insurgency planes and the most advanced jet fighter in the U.S. arsenal, the F-16.²

The battle to uphold militant containment in Korea fed into the resurgent rollback policy current led by Ronald Reagan. Reagan’s appointees quickly remilitarized U.S. policy in Asia. They set out to reassert U.S. power everywhere. They were prepared to fight limited and protracted nuclear wars. To implement the new policy, they backed to the hilt the navy’s “maritime strategy” for the first three years of Reagan’s rule. Yet, the military budget grew so fast that no service could complain at the navy’s favored status.³

In quest of rollback as well as containment, the Reagan administration gave the green light to revising military doctrine to reflect its offensive orientation. This chapter shows how Airland Battle—the Army’s new operational doctrine—reinvigorated nuclear options for land battle that had been downgraded only a decade before.

For the U.S. Army in Korea, the Reagan era was a golden opportunity to enhance its organizational mission in the new cold war. Kim Il Sung was the perfect enemy, and Chun Doo Hwan was the perfect ally with whom to persuade the Reagan ideologues to give them a free hand in Korea.

This chapter describes how the army reorganized and expanded its nuclear forces in South Korea to project new levels of threat against North Korea and its allies, especially the Soviet Union. It also positioned itself to handle arms sales to the politically powerful People's Liberation Army in China and to dominate relations with the Japanese Ground Forces.⁴ Its goal was to become the preeminent service in dealings with the East Asian great powers. Reinforcing its position in Korea was central to this game plan.

The administration signaled that it would rely first and foremost on military power in Korea by sending to Seoul as ambassador Richard "Dixie" Walker, an original cold warrior. With Walker in the embassy, the U.S. military was assured of primacy in dealing with Chun Doo Hwan, the South Korean general who had grabbed the presidency in two bloody coups and the first foreign head of state to meet President Reagan in Washington.

But the contradictions of nuclear warfighting ideology could not be disguised by Airland Battle in Korea or resolved by upgrading the nuclear forces. This chapter describes the new doctrine, the forces, and the oxymoronic state of nuclear warfighting doctrine in Korea during the Reagan administration.

Offensive Strategy

Under Reagan, nuclear strategy in Korea remained an incoherent mix of disparate elements. Lacking political guidance, war planners proceeded myopically to develop targets and procedures based on campaign analysis, and informed by the legacy of past doctrines dressed up with the latest nuclear fashion from Europe.

Consequently, nuclear doctrine and deployments in Korea evolved at a different pace than they did in Europe. New weapons and strategic shifts often arrived after they appeared in Europe, due to the predominance of Europe in the U.S. Army's mission. As a result, obsolete weapons and strategy stayed on in Korea long after they were removed or revised in Europe. Incongruous strategies and weapons developed for conditions in Europe were introduced into Korea without much thought. Just as in Europe, however, U.S. Army nuclear deployments and strategy were

driven by ad hoc considerations of bureaucratic advantage, service rivalry, and technological innovation.⁵

The legacy from Carter's debacle in Korea was inflexible response—the awkward combination of residual massive retaliation philosophy from the 1950s with flexible response technology from the 1960s. The army spliced “forward” and then “active” defense onto this inflexible response in the 1970s. Now it grafted Airland Battle doctrine onto the hybrid growth, the outcome of ideological turmoil in the army between 1980 and 1982 over how to fight in Europe.

Army officers, who typically rotate to Korea for one year or less, quickly transmitted Airland Battle to Korea. It was first tested in the 1983 Team Spirit exercise.⁶ The new strategy was important because it projected—on paper at least—an entirely new level of retaliatory and preemptive threat against North Korea.

This new doctrine upgraded maneuver warfare over the application of static firepower, whether nuclear or conventional. More important, it reintroduced the idea of an early deep strike at the opponent's support forces well behind the forward battle zone—unlike MacArthur's eventual counteroffensive at Inchon during the Korean War—and integrated small, accurate nuclear weapons into the strategy. Shortly thereafter, maneuver was further upgraded over firepower in army doctrine. In short, the U.S. military was moving from a gridiron, football-style blocking strategy, combined with a limited active defense, to a more fluid, soccer-style offensive defense.

In this deep-strike strategy, nuclear weapons were seen to provide a variety of options. Barriers, conventional maneuvering forces, and nuclear attack could be used to canalize the antagonist into killing zones. A 1982 report to the Defense Nuclear Agency on army nuclear operations described the new philosophy:

In summary, nuclear weapons are used in the defense to destroy assault forces and follow-on echelons before they penetrate the main battle area; to destroy or disrupt logistics support formations, to create obstacles and canalize enemy forces into preferred areas, to blunt or stop a penetration, to destroy enemy forces in the penetration, to control terrain, as an economy of force, to create opportunities for offensive actions, to protect forces during counterattacks, and as highly flexible reserves.⁷

In 1984 Team Spirit tested “Cross-FLOT (forward line of own troops) operations.” The exercise included an “air-mobile operation” over the “forward line” in Korea—that is, over the demilitarized zone,—for an offensive into North Korea.⁸ Moreover, the Combined Forces Command's war plan (known as OPLAN 5027) incorporated the new strategy.

According to U.S. military sources, the revised OPLAN envisaged inserting special forces into North Korea as soon as war begins. After five or six days of indecisive battle along the demilitarized zone, Korean marines were to grab beachheads near Pyongyang and Wonsan. The South Korean Third Army's Seventh Corps (now headquartered at Annyang as a swing force) was to break through the North Korean lines on the demilitarized zone and head for Pyongyang. U.S. military officers believed that they would reach the northern capital in about two weeks, at which time they would win the war.

Deterrence Bluff?

Many South Korean and some U.S. officers interpret this Airland Battle doctrine more as deterrence bluff than realistic military strategy. Some South Korean military analysts fear being bogged down in protracted war with North Korean forces north of the demilitarized zone and note that they lack the mobility required to implement lightning deep strikes against North Korea.

For its part, the U.S. Army states that it has not examined the applicability of Airland Battle doctrine to Korean circumstances or contingencies. It appears that the army has mechanically and bureaucratically applied the doctrine to Korean war plans by using manuals developed for Europe.

From the viewpoint of maintaining U.S. control of southern strategy, the implementation of Airland Battle doctrine could have unanticipated effects. South Korean forces vastly outnumber U.S. troops in the combined forces. Implementing Airland Battle strategy in Korea is even more contingent on allied unity than in Europe. Unlike European allies which are reluctant to adopt the Airland Battle strategy, South Korea is more likely to entertain irredentist aspirations that might motivate it to support an offensive strategy, no matter how foolhardy.

The strategic relevance of Airland Battle strategy to Korea is also dubious. Fighting an Airland Battle in Korea would leave little room for errors by a defender such as South Korea which must fight without big reserves and strategic depth.⁹ Moreover, the allies have different time scales for making strategic decisions. This time lag increases the chances that the allies will pursue divergent strategy and tactics in spite of the existence of the Combined Forces Command.¹⁰

Like his counterpart in Europe, the U.S. commander in Korea has likely adopted the rhetoric of Airland Battle doctrine in war plans but largely ignored it in remodelling his force structure.¹¹ In reality, he remains committed to a static, forward defense and nuclear warfighting.

If Airland Battle doctrine is just foam on the ocean, then North Korean strategists may discount it militarily while noting the rollback political strategy espoused in its rhetoric. Alternatively, if they believe that the doctrine actually expresses the intentions in war plans and capabilities on the ground, then they may view it as communicating the lethal message that the United States and South Korea are setting out to gain a preeminent capability—whatever the real intentions of the southern allies.

Under Reagan, nuclear threats against North Korea were intensified. In 1982 the Pentagon's *Defense Guidance* referred to Korea as the target of possible U.S. "horizontal escalation" in a war with the Soviet Union.¹² In 1983 the Team Spirit exercise practiced attacking and invading the north to defend the south. By 1983 Team Spirit had become the largest U.S. field training exercise with any U.S. ally. From 46,000 troops in 1976, it had grown to over 191,700 troops, of whom 118,000 were South Korean and 73,700 American (41,500 from outside Korea). By 1984 it involved over 200,000 troops.¹³

Typically, Team Spirit was held about 50 kilometers south of the DMZ. Until about 1983, it was run on a north-south rather than an east-west axis. It involves a large scale logistics and deployment exercise (such as erecting tent cities and moving in supplies and out-of-country troops). The field training exercise usually starts in late March, with amphibious attack; riverine crossings; airdrops; maneuver warfare; command post exercises; concurrent naval exercises offshore; and specialized exercises for activities such as chemical and nuclear warfare.¹⁴

"Nobody can guarantee," declared Pyongyang in 1982, "that this unprecedentedly large-scale war exercise staged with many nuclear weapons will not escalate into a full-scale nuclear war against our republic."¹⁵ That year, a huge U.S. B-52 bomber swooped low over the valley where the Team Spirit exercise was observed by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan—"an apparent symbol," as the *Washington Post* reporter put it, "of the U.S. nuclear punch that could top off any conventional defense of the South."¹⁶

In 1983, Team Spirit tested the Airland Battle doctrine, designed "to take the fight to the enemy in depth," including amphibious landings.¹⁷ In 1984, B-52s were involved in the Team Spirit scenario—an amphibious attack on the east coast of South Korea, said to be a "realistic application of Air-Land Battle to Korea."¹⁸

Nuclear Forces in Korea

To support this strategy, the United States has upgraded the forces dedicated to nuclear war in Korea. In contrast to NATO policy, little informa-

tion exists in public print about these forces. Replying to the author, the Pentagon stated that

United States policy is to neither confirm nor deny the exact location of our nuclear forces. For this reason we are unable to respond to questions whose answers would imply the presence or absence of nuclear weapons at a specific location or provide, even indirectly, information relating to nuclear weapons planning or operations.¹⁹

In spite of this blanket denial, U.S. nuclear forces in Korea can be described from information now in the public domain as a result of the research conducted for this study.

In its internal telephone book, for example, the Eighth Army lists a Plans and Operations Nuclear Division in South Korea. The division has three branches, which cover nuclear plans and operations, control of the weapons, and emergency disposal.²⁰ According to the *Organization and Functions Manual* of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), the Division “analyzes nuclear targets,” “performs nuclear fireplanning,” and “prepares nuclear contingency plans.”²¹ (The parallel nuclear command system in the bilateral command with Korea and the UN Command are described in the next chapter.)

Command and Control

The United States also maintains an infrastructure for the command and control of nuclear weapons in Korea. These systems are as crucial to U.S. nuclear capability as the weapons themselves. U.S. Eighth Army Headquarters is responsible for operations and training involving Emergency Action Messages (nuclear fire-orders) and procedures, the physical security of the weapons, and the reliability of nuclear personnel.²² The latter function is known as the Personnel Reliability Program (PRP). It is coordinated by the Eighth Army’s Nuclear Surety Team supported by the Eighth Personnel Command.²³ According to the Eighth U.S. Army, in 1988 there were 644 PRP positions in the Second Division.²⁴ Thus, about 5 percent of U.S. ground forces in Korea are devoted to the nuclear mission.

In early 1985, there were reportedly sixty nuclear gravity bombs stored at Kunsan for loading into nuclear-capable F-4 and F-16 fighter-bombers.²⁵ These weapons could be targeted on North Korean troop concentrations in the battlefield. Alternatively, they could be delivered above North Korean, Soviet, or Chinese “high payoff” geographic targets, such as transshipment points and bottlenecks, as well as the transportation system. “Nuclear attacks,” BDM Corporation advised the U.S. Defense Nuclear Agency in 1982, “also have the potential [in North Korea] of causing increased rebuild times and hence longer delays”²⁶

Nuclear Communications

Communicating nuclear fire-orders requires transmission over U.S.-owned and controlled communications systems. Subject to that constraint, within the corps there are no nuclear-unique communications systems. Each headquarters simply uses existing communication nets for nuclear operations.²⁷

The requisite Emergency Action Consoles for communicating nuclear fire orders and codes are located at the U.S.–South Korean TANGO and Command Post Seoul Headquarters, linking to another Emergency Action Facility that uses teletype at the Combined Field Army Bunker at Camp Red Cloud (see figure 6–1)²⁸ The Second Infantry Division's Operations Division is responsible for operating the division's Tactical Operations Center at Camp Casey, as well as the division's Emergency Action Facility.²⁹ From these command posts, FM radio or landlines would provide links to nuclear units, depending on their location.

The spearhead of the army's nuclear arsenal in Korea is nuclear artillery. As of 1987, the army had three basic types of nuclear artillery in Korea.³⁰ Their operating characteristics are summarized in table 6–1.

In 1985, forty 203-mm and thirty 155-mm artillery shells were reportedly stored at Kunsan (see table 6–2). The precise number today is unknown. It has likely increased since 1985 due to the deployment of new 203-mm nuclear projectiles, although these may have displaced older nuclear shells.

These 155- and 203-mm artillery tubes are the Division's major delivery systems. The total nuclear-capable artillery tubes embedded in this organization and disposed as described amounts to only fifty-four 155-mm tubes and twelve 203-mm tubes. In wartime, therefore, the division plans also to use South Korean artillery units to fire nuclear weapons (see chapter 7).

Doctrinal Dead End

Militarily, nuclear artillery shells are justified as providing a reserve of firepower that can stave off defeat in the face of a numerically superior force. "Because [nuclear shells] are controllable and usable," the Pentagon told Congress in 1981, "their presence provides a real threat to enemy forces, reducing their effectiveness in massing to conduct a conventional battle."³¹

The general philosophy has been to rely on the shorter-range 155-mm cannons close to the front. Thus, there are four times as many 155-mm as there are 203-mm tubes in U.S. Forces Korea. The smaller cannons are intended to respond quickly to the needs of frontline troops. Consequently, the 155-mm cannon would target frontline North Korean ar-

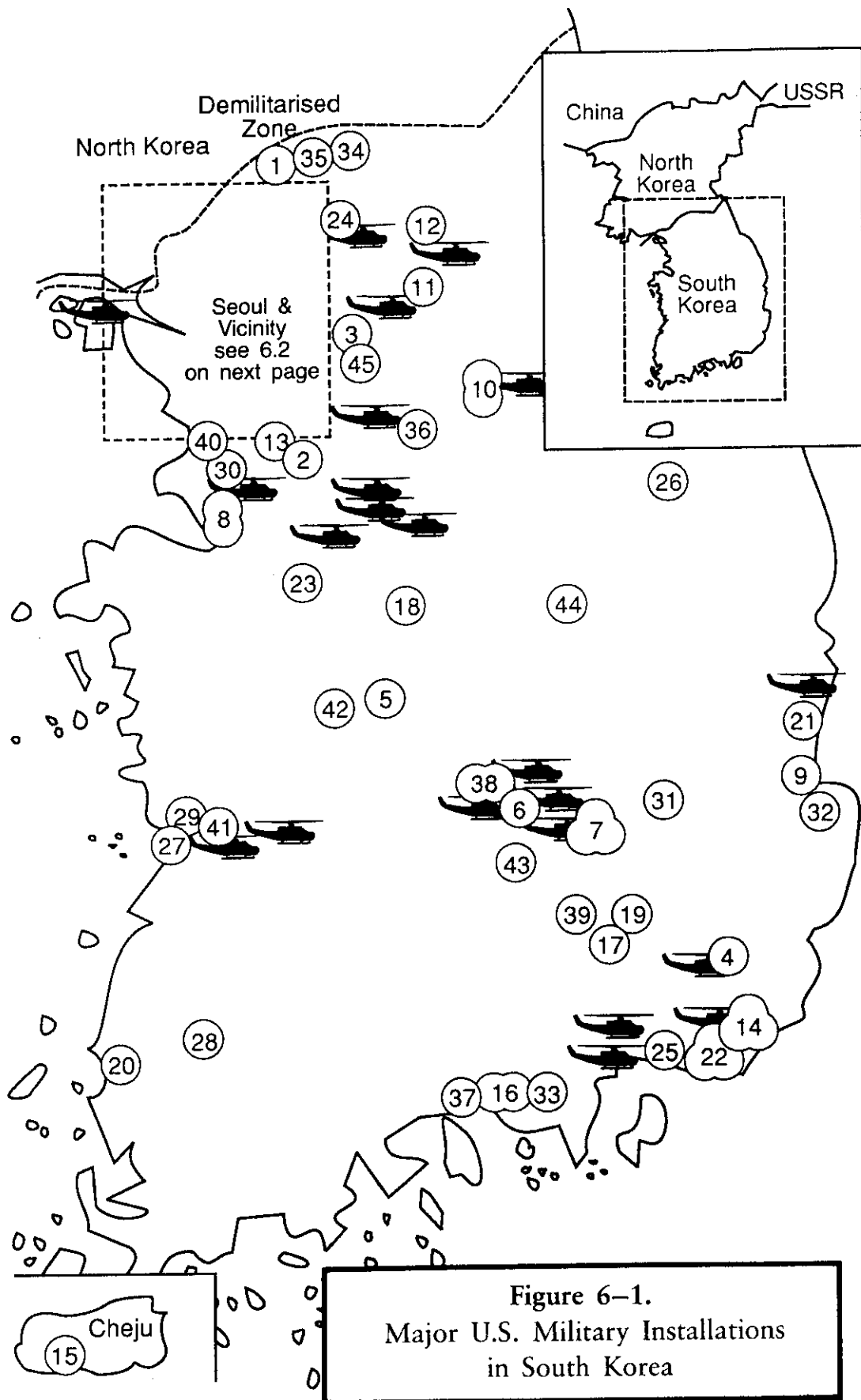

































































































Figure 6-1.
Major U.S. Military Installations
in South Korea

Figure 6-1. Major U.S. Military Installations in South Korea *continued*

	Artillery Unit		Gunnery/Bombing Range
	Command Post		Naval Base
	Army Base		Munition Storage
	Communications/Signals		Space Tracking Station
	Intelligence Base		Nuclear Warhead Storage
	Airfield/Air Force Base		Radar Site
	Missile Site		Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants

 Helicopter (UH-1, CH-47) Ports, U.S.-operated only, not all 85 identified sites in South Korea are shown.

- 1 Alamo Asa  2 Bayonne Signal Site  3 Beason  4 Brooklyn  5 Cp Ames 
6 Cp Carroll  7 Cp Henry, Cp George  8 Cp Humphreys  9 Cp Libby  
10 Cp Long  11 Cp Page  12 Page Training Area  13 Cp Yongin 
14 Changsan  15 Cheju-do   16 Chinhae COMUSNAVFORKOREA Det   
17 Choejongsan Sat Tracking Site  18 Chonju Air Base  19 Dart Board 
20 Hampyong LORAN Trans Site   21 Hunghae LORAN Trans Site  
22 Hialeah  23 High Point  24 Hwaaksan AFKN Evenreach ATC  
25 Kimhae Storage Annex  26 Korean Tactical Attack Range  
27 Kunsan Air Base (K-8)    28 Kwangju Air Base (K-57)  14 K-9 Airfield  
29 Little Inch  16 Masan Ammo Depot   22 Orleans 
30 Osan Air Base (K-55) and Ammo Storage    31 Palgongsan Liaison Annex 
32 Pohang COMUSNAVFORKOREA Det  and Pohang Commo Site  
33 Pulmosan  22 Pusan Storage Facility   8 Pyong-Taek CPX area    
34 Radar Site 7   35 Radar Site 8   36 Radio Beacon Site  
37 Sachon Storage Annex  38 Salem (2 sites)  39 Song-sol  
40 Suwon Air Base  41 Tacoma  7 Taegu Air Base (K-2) 
42 Taejon (Richmond and Taejon POL)   7 USAG-T Storage Area 
43 Waegwan   10 Wonju Air Station  44 Yechon Commo Site  
45 Yongmunsan Liaison Annex 

Bases in the city of Seoul, including Yongsan, are shown on figure 6.2

Sources: 29th Engineer Battalion, U.S. Forces Korea, "U.S. Installations and Facilities in South Korea as of August 1984," CINCPACFLT, Facilities Mobilization Plan In Support of CINCPACFLT OPLANS. Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Facilities Planning Department, U.S. Department of the Navy Pacific Division, September 1983, pp. D-89, D-90; released under U.S. Freedom of Information Act request; "Pentagon aims at bases cutback" *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 31, 1990, p. 15; "Pact is reached to Move U.S. forces Based in Seoul" *Wall Street Journal*, May 3 1989, p. 14

Note: Cp = Camp; Map identifies U.S.-controlled facilities only. For example, the small U.S. NAVFORKOREA Marine Detachment at the ROK Marine Cp at the Pohang airfield complex is not shown as a U.S. installation as the site is not U.S.-controlled. Also, the reorganization of U.S. air force bases at Kwangju, Suwon and Tawgu (reportedly for relocation to Kunsan) announced in January 1990 is not shown here.

Figure 6-2.
U.S. Military Installations,
Seoul and Vicinity

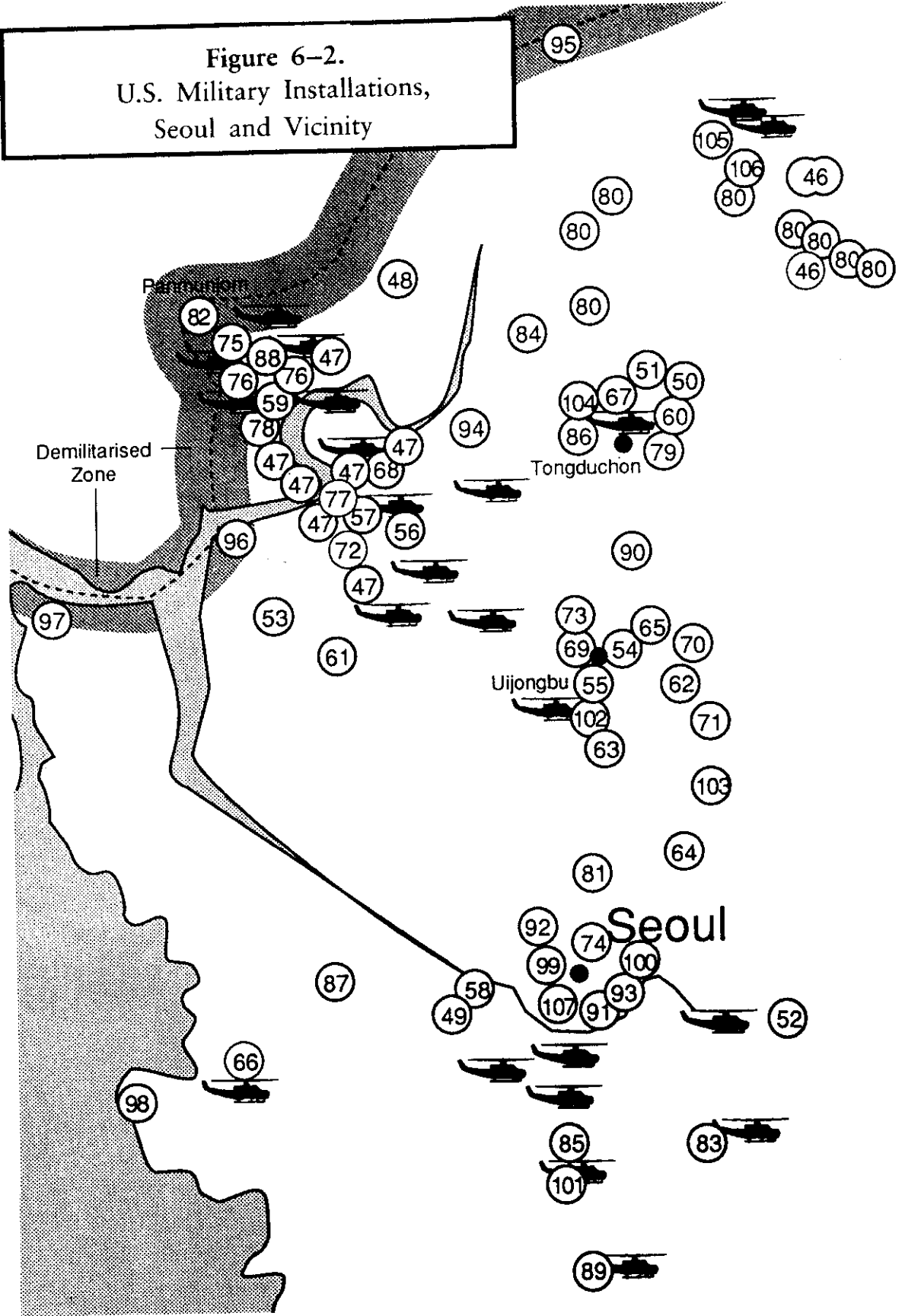










Figure 6-2. U.S. Military Installations, Seoul and Vicinity *continued*

	Artillery Unit		Gunnery/Bombing Range
	Command Post		Naval Base
	Army Base		Munition Storage
	Communications/Signals		Space Tracking Station
	Intelligence Base		Nuclear Warhead Storage
	Airfield/Airforce Base		Radar Site
	Missile Site		Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants

 Helicopter (UH-1, CH-47) Ports, U.S.-operated only, not all 85 identified sites in south Korea are shown.

- 46 Bayonet Training Areas (3 sites) 
- 47 Bulls Eye No 1 (Dagmar Sth, Dragon Head, Palmer Range 9, Squad Area Nth, Squad Area Sth, Crab Island, Meyers Range 10) 
- 48 Bulls Eye No 2 (Dagmar Nth)  49 Cp Baker 
- 50 Cp Casey (Mike, November)  51 Cp Castle  52 Cp Colbern 
- 53 Cp Edwards  54 Cp Essayons  55 Cp Falling Water 
- 56 Cp Gary Owen  57 Cp Giant  58 Cp Gray Annex  59 Cp Greaves 
- 60 Cp Hovey (Oscar, Papa, Quebec, Romeo)  61 Cp Howze  62 Cp Indian 
- 63 Cp Jackson  64 Cp Kim  65 Cp Kyle  66 Cp Market  67 Cp Nimble 
- 68 Cp Pelham  69 Cp Red Cloud  70 Cp Sears  71 Cp Stanley 
- 72 Charlie Block  73 Concord (Hill 468)  74 District Engineering Compound 
- 75 DMZ South Half  76 4 Papa 1  77 4 Papa 3  78 Freedom Bridge 
- 79 (Gimbols (Sierra, Tango, Uniform, Victor, Whiskey))  80 Gun Training Area (8 sites) 
- 81 Hill 343  82 Joint Security Area MAC HQ  83 K-16 Airfield  
- 84 Kamaksan ASA  85 Kamngnam POL Terminal   86 KCT 43 
- 87 Kimpo Airfield   88 Kittyhawk  88 Liberty Bell  89 Madison 
- 90 Mobile  91 Morse  92 Naija Hotel  93 Niblo Barracks  82 Panmunjom JSA
- 94 Papyongsan ATC  88 Radar Site 4  95 Radar Site 6  96 Radar Site 9 
- 97 Radar Site 11  98 Seattle Shinbuk Relay  99 Seoul Housing Annex 
- 100 SP31  82 Swisse-Swede Camp MAC HQ  101 Tango HQ 
- 102 Tobongsan Ammunition Center  103 Toegyewon POL Terminal 
- 104 Tongduchoni    105 Watkins Range  106 Yongpyong (Rodriguez) 
- 107 Yongsan Garrison  

Sources: see figure 6-1

Note: Cp = Camp; Map identifies U.S.-controlled facilities only. For example, the small U.S. NAVFORKOREA Marine Detachment at the ROK Marine Cp at the Pohang airfield complex is not shown as a U.S. installation as the site is not U.S.-controlled. Also, planned relocation of Yongsan garrison to Taejon City (see base 42, Map 6.1) announced in May 1990 is not shown. Although Tobongsan is now ROK-controlled it is shown as it serves reportedly as the Army's forward contingency nuclear storage site.

Table 6-1
Characteristics of Nuclear Artillery in Korea

<i>Artillery</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
<i>A. 155-mm</i>	
Series projectile:	204
AFAP designation:	M454/M454E7
Warhead designation:	W48
Initial operating year:	July 1957, later in Korea
Container designation:	M467
Core/fissile material:	Plutonium 239; or alloy
Yield:	0.1 Kt
Firing system:	dual-capable M198/109 howitzers and older 155-mm howitzers
Range:	1.6-14 km
Accuracy:	ballistically dissimilar to conventional rounds, poor
Fuse:	mechanical: M32E1 and T361E2
Field assembly:	not applicable
Length:	34 inches
Weight:	53 kg
Training round:	M455
Spotting round:	not applicable
PAL/safeguards system:	mechanical combination lock PALs
<i>B. Old 8-inch</i>	
Series projectile:	218
AFAP designation:	M422/M422C
Warhead designation:	W33
Initial operating Year:	1956, deployed in Korea later
Container designation:	M-500 contains the projectile M-102 "Birdcage" contains the warheads
Core/fissile material:	Uranium-235 Gun Assembly 992 T-Z nuclear core package 992 P-Z nuclear core package (modernized 992 core, probably uses tritium) 994 P-W nuclear core package
Yields:	two or three yields, sub-Kt, 2 Kt, 10Kt
Firing system:	M110 self-propelled 8-inch howitzer; older M55/115 howitzers
Range:	18.2 km maximum
Accuracy:	ballistically dissimilar to conventional round, needs spotting round
Fuse:	mechanical, M542 or T316E3
Field assembly:	warheads have to be inserted into projectile in field up to 1/2 hour
Projectile length:	49.5 inches
Projectile weight:	107kg
Training round:	M423
Spotting round:	M424 high explosive
PAL/safeguards system:	separation of components; combination lock PALs which deny access to warheads; seals on components
<i>C. New 8-inch</i>	
Series projectile:	220
AFAP designation:	M753
Warhead designation:	W79

Table 6-1 continued

Artillery	Characteristics
Initial operating Year:	1985 Stockpiled in United States; 1985-87, deployed in Korea?
Container designation:	M613
Core/fissile material:	Plutonium, tritium
Yield:	"Dial-a-bomb", sub-Kt-10 Kt. Insertable (ER) enhanced radiation components to maximize neutron radiation; ER deployment in Korea unknown.
Firing systems:	M 110 self-propelled 8-inch howitzer; older M55/115 howitzers; Lance missiles, deployment in Korea unknown.
Range:	15 km with ER option; 29 km with rocket assist, no ER option.
Accuracy:	ballistically similar to conventional shells.
Fuse:	target sensor, electronic programmer, timing/memory assembly, more reliable burst height
Field assembly:	not applicable
Length:	43 inches
Weight:	100 kg
Training round:	M173/M174
Spotting round:	not applicable
PAL/safeguards system:	Category D PAL in warhead; command disable in M613 container

Sources: M. Aid, "Artillery Fired Atomic Projectiles: Do We Really Need Them?" mimeo, June 10, 1980; J. Anderson, "Neutron Bombs Could Be Used in South Korea," *Washington Post*, May 4, 1983, p. C-13; W. Biddle, "New Army Shells Could Double As Neutron Bombs," *New York Times*, December 14, 1984, p. 24; T. Cochran, et al., *U.S. Nuclear Forces and Capabilities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1984), pp. 47-48, 54-55, 77-78, 309; Weapons Support Detachment—Korea, *Nuclear Operations Standard Operation Procedures (WSD-K NUC OPS SOP)*, Camp Page, Chun Chon, South Korea, September 22, 1987, annex 8, pp. 30-31, 41-42; provided in Eighth U.S. Army response to U.S. Freedom of Information Act request.

Note: AFAP = Artillery Fired Atomic Projectile; PAL = Permissive Action Link.

mored maneuver forces, especially the tanks.³² The smaller (subkiloton) shells fired by this weapon might destroy only two or three tanks per shot.³³

The bigger, older, longer-range 203-mm pieces are kept farther to the rear. They are allocated to divisional and corps level artillery commanders who would target them on larger targets of massed forces. The greater (up to 10 kiloton) yield could knock out an armored company with fifteen tanks and other armored vehicles. To do so, however, the shell must be delivered with an accuracy of a few score meters. The 203-mm shell is notoriously inaccurate, slow in response due to lengthy assembly time, and prone to bursting unreliably on or just above the ground, tossing huge amounts of fallout into the air.

In the face of one such weapon, a North Korean armored regiment

Table 6-2
U.S. Nuclear Weapons at Kunsan Air Base, South Korea, 1977-1985

Type	Number		
	Pre-1977 ^a	1983 ^b	1985 ^c
Aerial gravity bombs	192	135	60
Artillery			
8-inch	56	63	40
155-mm	152	31	30
Enhanced Radiation		?	?
Surface-surface missiles			
80 Honest John		0	0
12 Sergeant		0	0
? Lance		?	?
Surface-air missiles			
144 Nike Hercules		0	0
Atomic demolition mines	25-50	20	21 ^d
Totals	660-686	249	151

^a"South Korea Summary," *DMS Market Intelligence Report*, 1978, pp. 7-8.

^bW. Arkin, citing Joint Chiefs of Staff sourcebook, in North American Coalition for Human Rights in Korea, "Consultation on Military and Nuclear Issues," mimeo, Washington D.C., December 9, 1983; R. Halloran, "Report to Congress Provides Figures for Nuclear Arsenal," *New York Times*, November 15, 1983.

^cW. Arkin and R. Fieldhouse, *Nuclear Battlefields, Global Links in the Arms Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1985), p. 231.

^dMedium ADMs (MADMs) were dismantled in the U.S. arsenal in 1987. Therefore, MADMs have been removed from South Korea. The situation with Special ADMs in Korea remains unclear as of 1987.

would undoubtedly survive although the blast effects would severely damage civilian structures over a 3-kilometer-wide area.³⁴

Scores of 155- and 203-mm weapons, therefore, would have to be used to disable North Korean armored forces numbering in the hundreds on the front line. Virtually all of them would explode on South Korean soil. Moreover, U.S. and South Korean forces would not find it easy to conduct defensive operations in the sea of rubble that would be left.³⁵

The only sure way to stun and block a North Korean attack using nuclear weapons would be by air-delivered airbursts of weapons yielding 100 kilotons or more. A 100 kiloton weapon burst above the invasion corridors south of the demilitarized zone would disable most of the armored vehicles within a 1-kilometer radius below ground zero. But this technique would also destroy civilian structures out for about 4 kilometers from ground zero, not to mention the widespread fallout. Like ADMs, a combined artillery-gravity bomb attack presents many political and military predicaments to the United States and South Korea alike.

One analyst of nuclear artillery summarized its deficiencies in the NATO context:.

Despite nuclear-capable artillery's responsiveness, ease of control, accuracy and low yields, problems with effective target acquisition, plus the probable breakdown of the [C3: command, control, communications] network under wartime conditions will render the use of AFAPs [artillery-fired atomic projectiles] useless after the first few days of combat on an integrated nuclear/nonnuclear battlefield, not to mention the addition of the large [Soviet, read North Korean] chemical weapon stockpile.³⁶

The army tried to circumvent these quandaries by developing the neutron bomb.

The neutron bomb trades decreased blast energy for increased generation of lethal, highly penetrating neutron radiation. If detonated at about 150 meters, the lethal radiation radius of a 1-kiloton neutron bomb explosion would be about 700 meters, about twice that of artillery shells that rely on simple fission.³⁷ The neutron bomb would destroy fewer civilian structures with a blast. But it would kill more civilians with radiation than would a simple fission weapon.³⁸ Thus, there is no technical fix to the acute dilemma posed by warfighting doctrine, even with the most advanced tactical nuclear weapons.

Journalists have long speculated that the army would deploy the neutron bomb (known in Korea as the "new 8-inch") in Korea.³⁹ WSD-K is prepared to deliver W-79 warheads on South Korean 155 mm cannons. The Lance missile is also designed with neutron bomb delivery in mind. It is possible (although unlikely) that the U.S. Army has sent the neutron bomb to Korea.⁴⁰

The army developed nuclear artillery with its budget rather than its battlefields in mind. This approach confounded army war planners who fell into ideological pitfalls of the army's own making. They simply gave up seeking military rationales for weapons that always lacked a specific, coherent military function.⁴¹

In theory, the army gives lip service to nuclear deterrence based on threats. In practice, the army still recoils from the main lesson of the Korean War—that battlefield use of nuclear weapons for compellence is self-defeating.

Reassurance of South Korea, however, has given the U.S. Army a political rationale for keeping nuclear weapons—and thereby itself—in the Peninsula. Realizing this goal, however, entailed integrating the South Korean military into the U.S. nuclear strategy. It also created a host of strategic dilemmas that now haunt the United States.

Collaboration

Mr. Paul: Do we also have other exercises practicing a technique of nuclear artillery or other forms of nuclear warfare with the South Koreans?

General Michaels: I have been instructed by the Secretary of Defense not to discuss questions pertaining to nuclear matters.

—U.S. Senate Hearing, February 26, 1970

We had all kinds of stuff there, Honest Jones, artillery rounds. In wartime, you would have had all the ROK soldiers, the KATUSAs, in American units. So all these ROK soldiers were trained on dummy warheads. It was absolutely ludicrous. It was also absolutely illegal. Nobody wanted to talk about it.

—Former State Department official,
November 16, 1987

Unbeknownst to most Americans and certainly most South Koreans, the South Korean military has long been integrated into U.S. nuclear operational planning, exercises, and war plans in Korea.

This chapter shows that this integration is highly developed, with institutional mechanisms devoted to ensuring that the two forces dovetail neatly on the prospective nuclear battlefield. These mechanisms are incomplete in comparison with NATO allies, their development having been arrested by political and legal factors. Nonetheless; organizational roots and branches for nuclear warfighting have become so interlaced that it can be difficult to distinguish which are U.S. and which South Korean.

Moreover, this chapter argues that these nuclear links are among the most sensitive aspects of U.S.—South Korean security relations. The hawks in the South Korean military have always favored retaliation against North Korea over restraint, offense over defense, force over negotiation, warfighting over threat, rollback over containment, compellence over deterrence, and deterrence over reassurance. They want the largest stick to beat the “mad dog” in Pyongyang to be in easy reach. As nuclear weapons are the biggest stick of all, they are viewed by the South Korean military as their trump card against North Korea. By the same token, the nuclear threat is also the U.S. Army’s ace card in Seoul used to deflect American critics of the nuclear commitment or to persuade the South Korean military to follow its lead.

The U.S. Army capitalized on its southern counterpart's attitudes to justify its own operational control of the South Korean military. It thereby penetrated deeply into the institutional structure of the South Korean military. This chapter describes the binational synthesis of command relations and force structures that supports nuclear warfighting. This collaboration enabled the army to argue that what is good for the army in Korea is good for the United States.

The chapter reveals that the joint approach to nuclear warfighting has meshed the organizational structures of the two militaries so that the South Korean Army fulfills multiple missions necessary for firing nuclear weapons. These tasks include intelligence, targeting, security, delivery, and defenses. The chapter delineates this hitherto secret force blending that the army has concocted with scant regard for its political implications.

It finds that two potential impacts are especially important: first, the effects on North Korean perceptions of the *combined* South Korean–U.S. nuclear threat (analyzed in chapter 8); second, the stimulation of South Korean aspirations to acquire a homegrown bomb. This latter dynamic greatly strengthened the hand of U.S. nonproliferation proponents in the State Department which fed into the militant containment policy current that defeated President Carter's withdrawal policy (see chapters 13 and 14).

The chapter concludes by examining the possibility that the arrangement contravenes the U.S. Atomic Energy Act, posing a possible political weakness in the Army's stance in Korea.

Early Links

The nuclear collaboration began in the late 1960s when the United States upgraded the South Korean military in the command of its own forces. In 1965 the U.S. military began to study how to represent the South Korean military in the UN Command.² By 1966 the Eighth Army was producing a "standard guiding document" on procedures for employing or defending against nuclear weapons, to "be sanitized and translated for use by the Republic of Korea (ROKA [Republic of Korea Army]) units."³ In March 1967 the U.S. Joint Chiefs approved the "release to ROK forces of a sanitized version of the Eighth Army SOP [Standard Operating Procedures] for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons." The procedures were released, according to the official history, "to permit a rapid transition to wartime operational methods with minimum confusion if nuclear weapons were made available for employment."⁴

The U.S. command history for 1966 reveals the degree to which the South Koreans were involved already in nuclear operations: "A new 'Alle-

gro' Code has been approved for use by both US and ROK units for processing nuclear fire missions . . . The 'Allegro' Code is much simpler to employ than those currently in use and will provide flexibility in conducting nuclear fire missions."⁵

In October 1968, a U.S.–South Korean Operational Planning Staff was finally formed, giving South Korea its first official voice in military planning.⁶ That year, a combined headquarters ran the Focus Retina and Freedom Vaught exercises.⁷ In July 1971 the first standing joint U.S.–South Korean combined headquarters was set up for the frontline I Corps (which included the U.S. Second Infantry Division).⁸

Henry Kissinger's game plan for settling the Korean conflict (see chapter 4), which heralded the eventual withdrawal of U.S. ground troops from Korea as a rigid commitment, was inconsistent with his flexible, global diplomacy. Scenting a new mission, the U.S. Navy licked its chops at the prospect that the U.S. Army would be forced out of Korea. In 1973 one navy study concluded that the army's troops in Korea were superfluous to deterrence and proposed substituting "maritime presence forces [two afloat marine amphibious units] for forces in Korea."⁹ "Reduction of the profile and the commitment of American forces in Korea," they added, "can be made incrementally as long as the basic balance is preserved by the presence of deployed sea based deterrence."¹⁰

The army was not unmindful of Nixon's and Kissinger's favoritism toward the unilateralist navy and an offshore strategy that aimed to keep the United States a Pacific rather than an Asian power. To offset this threat, it served the army's interest to speed up its integration with South Korean forces. In 1974 the army created a combined battle staff within the UN Command and in July integrated the separate U.S. staffs serving UN Command/U.S. Forces Korea and the Eighth U.S. Army.¹¹

The same month, Gen. Richard Stilwell, then U.S. commander in Korea, recommended that a combined command be created with South Korea.¹² The immediate motive was to undercut moves at the United Nations to disestablish the UN Command in Korea.¹³ Exercises Ulchi (ROK) and Focus Lens (U.S.) held in November 1975 were combined. For the first time, the proficiency of a permanent, combined U.S.–South Korean battle staff was tested. The combined exercise led to a recommendation that a combined command be created.¹⁴

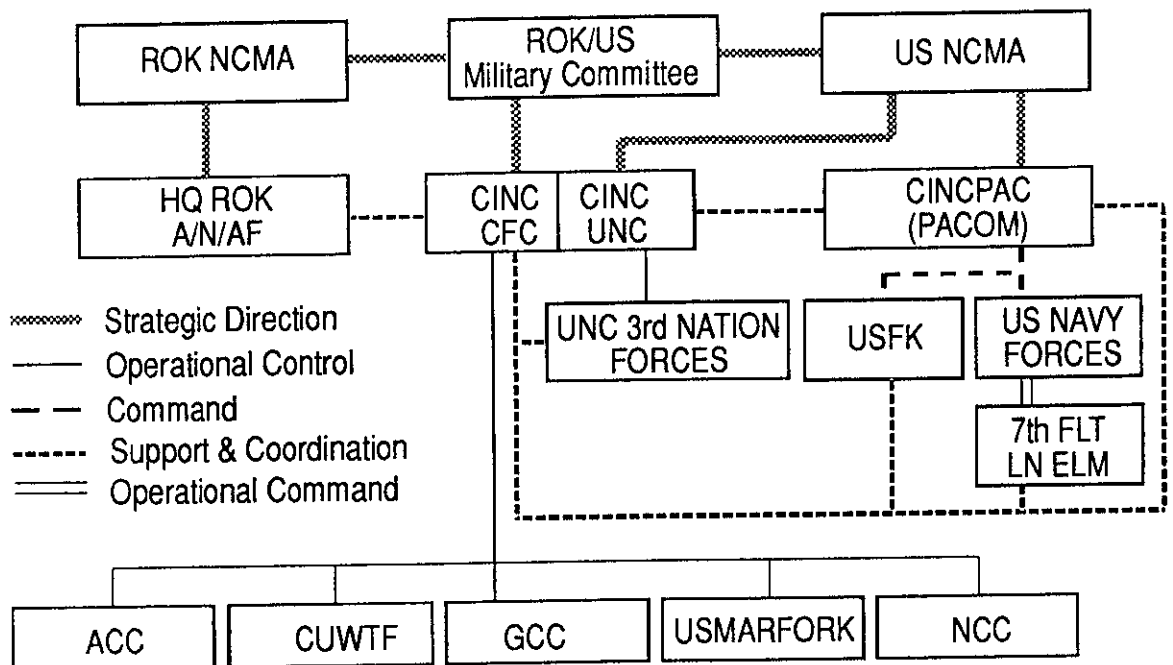
Team Spirit began the following year, involving about 46,000 South Korean and U.S. troops. In 1977 the exercise involved 87,000 military personnel, increasing to no fewer than 118,000 in 1978—the year that Carter's troop withdrawals were under way.

The 1978 exercise was the first to include significant U.S. forces from outside Korea, reflecting the military's concern that withdrawn U.S. ground forces might have to be reintroduced should the U.S.–South Ko-

rean security commitment be invoked in a renewed north-south war. It was also the first to be conducted under the newly created Combined Forces Command. In addition to the 107,000 troops involved, two hundred U.S. Air Force planes and twelve Seventh Fleet warships joined the exercise.¹⁵

The creation of the combined command was a wily move by opponents of Carter's withdrawal policy. The command was justified as reassuring the South Koreans.¹⁶ In fact, it placed great pressure to keep American troops in Korea as a U.S. commander of the combined command bereft of U.S. ground troops could not expect the South Korean military to take much notice of him in wartime.

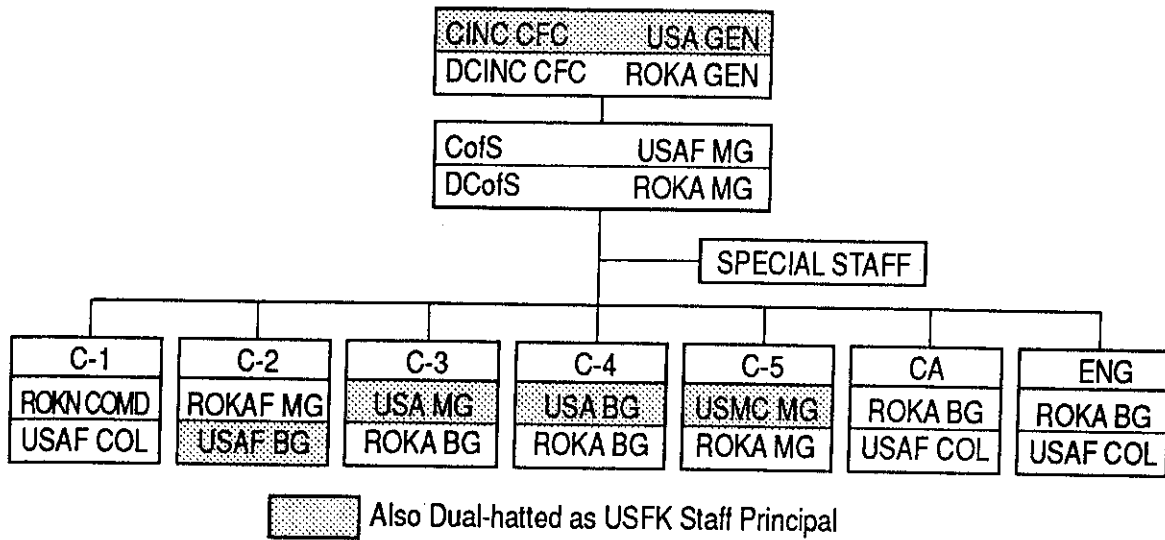
The shift in operational control (that is, effective military command minus control over promotion and discipline) from the UN Command remaining from the Korean War to the bilateral Combined Forces Command took place in November 1978.¹⁷ In what Gen. Richard Stilwell, former U.S. commander in Korea, calls "the most remarkable concession of sovereignty in the entire world,"¹⁸ the U.S. army general who acts as



ACC: Aerial Component Command. CUWTF: Combined Unconventional Warfare Task force. GCC: Ground Component Command. LN ELM: Liaison Element. NCC: Naval Component Command. NCMA: National Command Military Authority. PACOM: Pacific Command. UNC: United Nations Command. USMARFORK: U.S. Marine Forces Korea.

Source: G. Rice, "CFC Command Relationships Orientation," mimeo, Command Relations Branch, Combined Forces Command, 1986, slide 8; released under U.S. Freedom of Information Act Request.

Figure 7-1. Wartime CFC Command Relationships



GEN = General; MG = Major General; BG = Brigadier General; DCINC = Deputy Commander in Chief; COL = Colonel; COMD = Commander; DCofS = Deputy Chief of Staff.

Source: G. Rice, "CFC Command Relationships Orientation," mimeo, Command Relations Branch, Combined Forces Command, 1986, slide 5; released under U.S. Freedom of Information Act Request.

Figure 7-2. CFC Command and Staff Relationships

commander of U.S. Forces Korea also commands *South Korean* military forces (see figure 7-1).¹⁹

As commander in chief of Combined Forces Command, the General is guided by directives from the U.S.–South Korean Military Committee set up in 1978 (see figure 7-1). In his capacity as nuclear commander, however, he answers only to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, not to the South Korean political leadership.

This reshuffling of hats to upgrade South Korean responsibility in the new Combined Forces Command was politically motivated and largely cosmetic. South Korean officers have no illusions about their continued subordination to U.S. commanders. They deeply resent this status, which contrasts sharply with that accorded to U.S. allies in NATO.²⁰ "Most central functions and staff posts," says Gen. Taek-Hung Rhee, "are assigned to U.S. military officers, no matter how heavy the burdens they bear from various other jobs they hold."²¹

Indeed, in October 1987 Roh Tae Woo, the winner of the December 1988 presidential elections, said that South Korea will try to regain control of its military forces in the 1990s.²² Many South Koreans now look upon the presence of U.S. forces as a "necessary evil."²³

Nonetheless, the Combined Forces Command created in 1978 does seem to have permitted South Koreans to participate in nuclear-related intelligence and campaign planning.

It has also ensured that the South Korean military leadership is regularly (at least annually) consulted and briefed by U.S. counterparts on war plans. Some South Korean defense analysts hold that their government is briefed at a very high level on the nuclear annex to U.S. Forces Korea war plan.²⁴ But U.S. officials say that this consultation occurs only informally on a military-to-military basis. As former U.S. commander in Korea Gen. Robert Sennewald stated unambiguously in 1988, "The US has talked at length about nuclear weapons with the Korean armed forces."²⁵ Such briefings are necessary not only for political reasons, but, more importantly, to coordinate the two operational functions fulfilled by the South Korean military in U.S. nuclear strategy (see table 7-1 and appendix C).

Provision of Delivery Systems

More concretely, according to the *Organization and Functions Manual* of U.S. Forces Korea, the South Korean Army would provide nuclear-capable delivery systems to U.S. teams that control nuclear warheads. The manual reveals that the Nuclear Operations Branch of the Eighth U.S. Army Plans, Operations, and Nuclear Division "coordinates employment of *Weapons Support Detachment—Korea nuclear support teams [NSTs] using ROK [Republic of Korea] Army weapon systems*"—a contingency for which the South Korean military must be prepared for and apprised of in advance. Elsewhere, the manual states that the (U.S.) Weapons Support Detachment—Korea "provides nuclear support teams prepared to fire nuclear weapons using ROK weapon systems."²⁶ Elsewhere, we are told that USFK's Nineteenth Support Command is: "To provide, on order from

Table 7-1
U.S.—South Korean Nuclear Integration

<i>Function</i>	<i>U.S. Unit</i>
Command and Control	Combined Forces Command
Communications and Intelligence	Combined All Sources Intelligence Center, Combined Field Army
Nuclear Biological and Chemical Defense (NBC)	Combined Field Army, NBC Division Nondivisional NBC School Korean Service Corps
Delivery	CSCT 1, 2, 3 Nuclear Operations Branch, U.S. Eighth Army Nineteenth Support Command Weapons Support Detachment—Korea Combined Field Army Artillery/Fire Support Element

Source: Text of chapter 7 and appendix C.

Commander, Eighth United States Army, Nuclear Support Teams (NST) prepared to deliver nuclear weapons using Republic of Korea (ROK) weapons systems under provision of the EUSA Tactical Nuclear SOP.”²⁷ The leader of the eight NSTs in Korea are located in the main headquarters of the Weapons Support Detachment—Korea at Camp Page.²⁸ The Detachment was formerly assigned to the nineteenth Support Command. Since February 1985, however, it has been assigned to the newly activated Eighth Army Special Troop Command headquartered at Yongsan (see below and appendix C).²⁹

Today, in preparation for their nuclear support role, South Korean forces practice nuclear command and control procedures with dummy nuclear codes—as do their U.S. counterparts.³⁰ That the South Korean Army is trained and dedicated to providing artillery tubes for the delivery of nuclear weapons is now certain. U.S. officials admit that the training goes on, although only with mock training weapons and confined to artillery. Proof that the South Koreans play this role is found in the statement of mission of the Combat Support Coordination Team 3 (see below), which includes monitoring “evaluations of TROKA [Third ROK Army] *Nuclear Capable Firing Batteries* and WSD-K Nuclear Support Team Training.”³¹

South Koreans, including a former chief of staff of the ROK Army, have confirmed privately that they conduct such activities.³² A former commander of a 155-mm artillery unit admitted that in 1974 he had trained with U.S. dummy nuclear weapons. This exercise had made him feel very uncomfortable, he added.³³

It cannot be ruled out that South Korean helicopters and Honest John missiles are also involved in the nuclear mission. The latter is suggested by the fact that the Second Infantry Division assistant division air defense officer recommends “the allocation of nuclear weapons for air defense missions (when weapons are available).”³⁴

As the United States retired its last active Honest John battalion in South Korea in 1979, turning the missiles over to the South Koreans minus the nuclear warheads, it is possible that the United States anticipates using the South Korean Honest John units for nuclear air defense.³⁵ There is, however, no evidence to this effect, and the Eighth U.S. Army has stated that it has no information on any plans to use South Korean missiles for nuclear air defense.³⁶

Nuclear Intelligence Role

The recently released *Organization and Functions Manual* of the U.S.—South Korean Combined Field Army states that an “Artillery/Fire Support Element” of the command stationed at Camp Red Cloud recommends and

implements “the allocation, prioritization [*sic*], and integration of all fire support assets to be used to attack surface targets”—including “Lance, NBC [nuclear, biological, and chemical] weapons.”³⁷ The manual also directs this element to “assist ROKA [South Korean Army] Artillery units in training and firing of special missions.”³⁸ The element is headed by a South Korean colonel with a U.S. deputy,³⁹ and includes a liaison team from the U.S. Weapons Support Detachment—Korea at the elements headquarters at Camp Red Cloud.⁴⁰

South Koreans also head up the division that runs the Combined All Source Intelligence Center, stationed at the Command, Control, and Communications Bunker at Camp Red Cloud.⁴¹ One function of the center is to estimate “enemy capabilities and intentions for employment of NBC weapons and enemy reaction to friendly [that is, U.S.–South Korean] employment of chemical or nuclear weapons.”⁴² A South Korean major also serves as deputy commander of the Combined Field Army’s NBC Division, also at Camp Red Cloud.⁴³ This division recommends “actions for NBC defense” and operates “the NBC element . . . within the fire support element of the tactical operations center.”⁴⁴ It also prepares the NBC portion of war plans and operations.⁴⁵ The overall commander for the operations directorate that runs this division is a South Korean brigadier general.⁴⁶

The South Koreans do not participate in the UN Command’s NBC Division. This division is a holdover from the past when nuclear operations and planning were conducted under the aegis of UN Command. Though the UN Command NBC Division still formally exists, it has no operational commanders assigned to it.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, the CFC command relationships described above could be “chopped” from CFC to UNC in wartime, although it is more likely that only UN allied forces would be assigned to it.⁴⁸

Allied liaison with UN Command is achieved through the Military Armistice Commission. The allies today are Australia, Canada, Columbia, France, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, and the United Kingdom. Japan allows U.S. allies to operate out of U.S. bases in Japan, although it is not a formal ally.

Nuclear Training

South Korean units have long conducted nuclear war exercises. This role seems to have predated the formation of a joint command by at least a decade.

In 1968, for example, the U.S. Seventh Division Artillery participated in the South Korean I Corps command post exercise Capitol Hill. Stated a U.S. Army report,

Upon alert all the headquarters and all battalion operation centers established field positions adjacent to their respective compounds. Fire support plans to include nuclear fires were completed. Fire Support of 12 battalions was coordinated and a 20 minute preparation was fired in support of the attack. The purpose of the exercise was to evaluate the effectiveness of the new I Corps contingency plan.⁴⁹

Another exercise called Myul Gong in April 1970 for the South Korean First Army also closely followed existing operational plans. According to the U.S. after-action report, the exercise aimed "to develop the means of air and ground movement under conditions of nuclear and CBR [chemical, biological, radiological] warfare."⁵⁰

Koreans are also trained under the Combined Command to clean up after a nuclear war in Korea. According to General William Livsey, the Korean Service Corps, a paramilitary civilian unit controlled by the U.S. commander in Korea, is currently charged in wartime with "NBC decontamination."⁵¹ In 1985, for example, the Thirty-seventh Korean Service Corps company performed NBC training in preparation for Team Spirit 85. The company, according to the official history, "accomplished an aggressive NBC training program."⁵² Koreans who serve as KATUSAs (South Korean troops who serve in U.S. units) also attend gung ho nuclear defense training at the Nondivisional NBC Defense School.⁵³

Obstacles to Integration

Integrating American and South Korean forces is not a simple matter. The organizational styles, cultural backgrounds, and doctrinal differences often block cross-cultural communication and impede military coordination.

These problems are evident at the simplest level of having to work with two languages. English and Hangul differ in how one replies to a negative question so that the answer "yes" has opposite meanings. As many personnel speak English and Hangul, no cross-cultural convention exists, complicating military communications.⁵⁴

Semantic riddles overlay fundamental disparities of attitudes toward authority. The U.S. military heavily devolves authority and responsibility on lower echelons. In comparison, the South Korean military hierarchy centralizes authority at upper rungs. American officers often find that their South Korean counterparts cannot take initiatives without referring back to senior commanders. For their part, South Koreans are often reluctant to believe that American officers speak authoritatively on contentious matters. The difficulty of ensuring precise communication of information exacerbates the problems caused by inherently different approaches to command and control.⁵⁵

Yet another layer of difficulty compounds the potential for confusion. While the organizational repertoires of the U.S. and South Korean military are similar, they have also developed different tactics for many types of combat. The combination of linguistic differences, cultural attitudes, and doctrinal divergence makes it imperative that special attention be paid to coordinating the two militaries. Nowhere is this more important than in the politically delicate and militarily weighty sphere of nuclear forces.

Nuclear Coordination

Preparing and implementing nuclear war plans in Korea remains wholly in American hands.⁵⁶ However, integrating U.S. activities with South Korean support units requires close coordination. U.S. Forces Korea has an intricate web of interaction spun from two types of units to fulfill these functions. These are the U.S. Army Combat Support Coordination Teams, or CSCTs, and the (U.S.) Weapons Support Detachment—Korea, or WSD-K. The intimate and expanding organization integrated into U.S. nuclear forces and their South Korean counterparts is detailed in appendix C.

The scope of the CSCTs includes nuclear missions entrusted to the South Korean Army. CSCT 1's logistics element, for example, helps FROKA with hands-on aspects of nuclear warfare. The element's ammunition officer coordinates with the FROKA G-4 staff to assess, develop, and coordinate "plans, policies and procedures pertaining to conventional and special munitions support and services."⁵⁷

This role is not limited to CSCT 1. According to U.S. Forces Korea, both CSCT teams coordinate the provision of U.S. combat and combat service support concerning "special weapons" for the First and Third South Korean Armies respectively.⁵⁸

Warfighting Integration

Although U.S. Forces Korea's ground, air, and naval forces are all nuclear-capable, the ground forces are short of artillery tubes with which to fire nuclear projectiles at North Korean troops. Consequently, the U.S. Weapons Support Detachment—Korea (WSD-K) is designed to link the U.S. nuclear organization and capabilities to the South Korean military. Undoubtedly, it is the most important link between U.S. and South Korean forces involved in nuclear warfare in Korea. It is the "inner sanctum" of military organization for nuclear warfighting in Korea.

Integrative Mission

WSD-K's integrative mission requires that it liaise with U.S. and South Korean units. The ROK liaison officer at WSD-K HQ provides direct

Table 7-2 WSD-K Units, 1988

Camp Page:

128th Aviation Company
275th Signal Company
61st Maintenance
SAACT No. 3
209th Military Intelligence Detachment
205th Aviation Company

Camp Coiner:

199th Personnel Command

Camp Jackson:

PLDC

Camp Red Cloud:

Eighth Emergency Ordnance Detachment
Red Cross

Camp Market:

74th Maintenance

Kunsan Air Base:

78th Ordnance

Yongsan:

Commander WSD-K

Supporting staff including weapons platoon leader, nuclear support team leaders

Source: WSD-K, *Telephone Directory*, 1988; released under a U.S. Freedom of Information Act request.

South Korean input into WSD-K. U.S. liaison officers at FROKA at Camp Long, Combined Field Army at Combined Red Cloud, TROKA at Yong In represent the WSD-K to South Korean units.

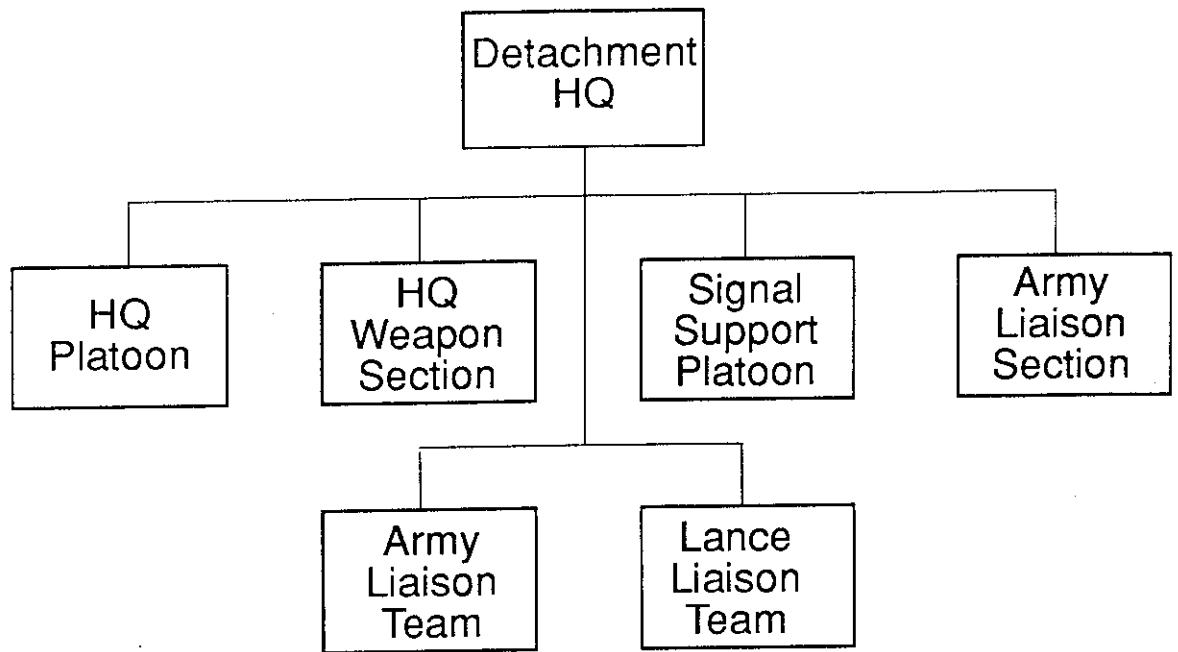
What is known about the units and sites of WSD-K is listed in table 7-2. The current (1988) structure of the unit is shown in figure 7-3.

Current Missions

WSD-K's missions relate to at least two U.S. Forces Korea war plans in Korea. These are outlined in Annex C of the top secret USFK/EUSA Oplan 5027 and in the secret EUSA Oplan 5002.⁵⁹

According to its hitherto secret Nuclear Operations Standard Operating Procedures, or NOSOP, WSD-K is responsible for ensuring that U.S. custody of nuclear weapons is always maintained and that they are only used with validated authorization.⁶⁰ WSD-K's Detachment S2/3 advises its commander on how best to use his unit's "nuclear assets" and coordinates the unit's operations with those of external supporting units.⁶¹

In wartime, an advance party would arrive at a prospective site before the convoy carrying the weapons and conduct a security sweep preparatory to securing the area.⁶² Upon arrival at this site, the unit is meant to secure the site where nuclear weapons and components would be stored



Source: *U.S. Army Weapons Support Detachment—Korea, Organizational Chart, 1989*, p. 2; released under U.S. Freedom of Information Act Request.

Figure 7-3. WSD-K Organizational Chart

until they are fired or removed. “The size of the FSL [field storage location],” says its NOSOP, “will be determined by the terrain, number of weapons stored, and the required security area. The size will be kept to the minimum operationally necessary.”⁶³

Two entry control guards at the only entry/exit point to the field site would maintain constant control on access, while other guards would patrol the perimeter of the site.⁶⁴

On nuclear-armed patrol, no one is to be trusted, not even members of the WSD-K. WSD-K’s commander establishes a “duress code” for all teams prior to loading weapons into delivery vehicles such as trucks or helicopters:

If the duress code is passed to a member of the team security force, the guard will aim his weapon at the individual(s) with the team member and order him to move away from the other individuals. All personnel will then be ordered to spread eagle on the ground and the team leader will be notified. Under no circumstances will the individuals be allowed to enter the exclusion area. This includes the use of deadly force, if necessary.⁶⁵

Because the Pentagon designates nuclear weapons and components as “Vital to the National Security,” U.S. security guards are authorized to use whatever force is required to prevent unauthorized access to these materi-

als. They are also ordered to apprehend or prevent the escape of individuals whose unauthorized presence in the vicinity threatens “the security or safety of the weapons.”⁶⁶ They are ordered to shoot intruders and, if intruders take hostage members of the NST, to fire on the captive Americans if necessary to ensure that the detachment retains control of nuclear weapons.⁶⁷

If attacked from the air, the unit is instructed to “pull vehicles off the road and under cover if available.” If ambushed on the ground, they are to return fire. “Attempt to drive out of kill zone,” states the NOSOP. “Do not become decisively engaged. Suppress threat and pass through the area. If passage is impossible then back out of the area.”⁶⁸

If the time arrives to fire the weapon, a seven-person operational assembly team would swing into action. Each team has a leader, a chief, two assemblers, a radio operator, and two guards.⁶⁹

“Prefire operations,” says the NOSOP, “may be performed in any of the team vehicles, an aircraft, a tent provided by the ROKA or in the case of the 155mm or the new 8”, at the howitzer.” Once the technical operations to fire the weapon are begun, the primers would be controlled by the team’s chief. He would also supervise the ramming of the projectile into the artillery tube and ensure that the proper propellant charge is placed in the powder chamber. As soon as the weapon is fired, he would inform the HQ of WSD-K that he has begun a nuclear war.⁷⁰

At this juncture—having just launched a nuclear attack—team members are ordered to leave the firing site clean and tidy. After using a series 204 projectile, for example, they are supposed to put the locking device inside the empty fuse container. Then they are meant to return residual items such as the fuse container and the permissive action link to the issuing ordnance unit, presumably for recycling for another nuclear war.⁷¹

Force Blending

All this coordination is required in wartime to unite South Korean artillery tubes with U.S. artillery-fired nuclear projectiles. WSD-K’s first task, however, is to deliver their nuclear weapons from their routine, rear locations to forward field storage and finally, to artillery batteries.

In wartime, U.S. nuclear units would carry nuclear weapons to forward storage locations or ROKA firing sites either in trucks or via helicopter. The vulnerability of ground convoys to ambush was noted in the last chapter. Air delivery is also fraught with difficulty.

The NSTs and their nuclear weapons could be airlifted to the FROKA, the TROKA, or the Combined Field Army.⁷² (The latter was known formerly as the ROK/US I Corps but was redesignated CFA in

March 1980.)⁷³ The NST's briefing format for air convoys forthrightly states, "We will conduct an air convoy to grid coordinates _____ and rendezvous with the _____ ROKA artillery unit and execute a fire mission . . . The TOT [Time over Target] is _____ hours."⁷⁴ Convoys are not meant to land before the designated time, presumably to minimize the time when they might be shelled, bombed, or ambushed on the ground.⁷⁵

Fifteen minutes before it lands, the convoy is supposed to notify the chief of the NST so that he can contact the ROK battery by radio. "The security [helicopter]," says the briefing, "will not land until authorized by the team chief."⁷⁶

Losses of Control

This step in the procedure is one place where things may go very wrong. First, the NST chief may be unable to contact the ROK battery. South Korean field artillery radio circuits are often so overloaded that U.S. units find communicating with them in exercises to be an almost insurmountable problem, especially if relay was required, due to distance or terrain obstacles to transmission.⁷⁷

Passwords may also break down. In 1988, for example, U.S. troops were confused for a day as to the correct password and countersign with South Korean troops during the Team Spirit exercise.⁷⁸ The mind boggles at the image of nuclear-loaded helicopters circling amidst an aerial war waiting for contact to be made.

Assuming that this contact will be made, the briefing envisages that the "mission aircraft" (that is, the nuclear-armed helicopter) would fly to an "orbit point" about 2–4 kilometers from the landing zone. Meanwhile, the security aircraft would fly to the landing zone at the firing point. What follows is worth citing:

The team chief will verify the security of the fire point and the identity of the ROK unit. The pilot of the security aircraft will maintain enough RPMs [revolutions per minute] to make a rapid takeoff, if necessary. After verifying everything is in order, the team chief will tell the pilot the LZ [landing zone] is clear and the pilot will call in the mission aircraft. The mission aircraft pilot will transmit the challenge [blank space] and the security aircraft pilot will reply with [blank space]. Upon receipt of the proper reply and my decision to proceed, the mission aircraft will go in to the LZ. The security aircraft may be repositioned to clear the LZ for the mission aircraft. The NST may require the use of the aircraft radio to call the ROK battery or team chief. If any problems occur which will cause the mission to abort, the mission aircraft will immediately go to [blank space].⁷⁹

Bearing in mind that this briefing admits that the NST leader may have to communicate with the battery via the helicopter radios, there is obvious potential for deception. North Koreans could pose as a ROK artillery unit. They could overrun a ROK artillery unit and force it to cooperate in deceiving the U.S. unit. Alternatively, a ROK artillery unit could deceive the U.S. unit into landing and then grab the nuclear weapons. These possibilities are multiplied by the cross-cultural difficulties of communication and recognition noted earlier.

En route to the firing site, the nuclear-laden helicopter might have to land, whether due to engine problems, damage from attack, or because NST personnel on board may have to decrypt messages received in-flight.⁸⁰ Again, the air convoy would be extraordinarily vulnerable to loss of control.

Whether it arrives by land or air, the NST unit would rely on South Korean infantry to provide security for the field storage site or the artillery firing site. As the NOSOP puts it:

The senior WSD-K Officer or NCO [noncommissioned officer] on the FSL [field storage location] is responsible to perform on site coordination with the ROK Officer in charge to insure [sic] smooth Reaction Force operations. The Nuclear Weapons Logistic Element and/or the Respective Field Army Liaison Teams are responsible to insure [sic] ROK personnel are present.⁸¹

At a field storage location, the South Korean infantry would provide at least one platoon to secure the area and to serve as a "reaction force" to deal with intruders. If U.S. military police are present, they would perform the reaction role. Then the South Koreans would provide infantry defense for the location.

If individual NST teams deploy to ROK Army firing sites, then the respective South Korean firing battery would provide the reaction force. Normally it would consist of the troops from the crew of the alternate howitzer not being used for the nuclear mission.⁸²

Political and Legal Dimensions

In spite of these supporting roles, the South Korean government is not entitled to information on the numbers, types, or locations of nuclear weapons in or intended for use in Korea. Nor, according to U.S. military officials, is there a combined U.S.–South Korean nuclear war plan for Korea. Such sharing in peacetime would require the transfer of classified U.S. nuclear technology, procedures, or information.⁸³

The U.S. military has not required the South Koreans to establish programs to certify the reliability of South Korean personnel engaged in peacetime nuclear support activities. Nor does the South Korean military conduct a parallel program.⁸⁴ Indeed, as such transfers must be approved by Congress, U.S. Forces Korea could not establish such programs until congressional approval for a program of cooperation (POC) is obtained.⁸⁵

PRPs and POCs

Personnel reliability programs [PRPs] are run by U.S. services and allies. Allied programs are established by each U.S. service interacting with its counterpart allied service. The legal basis for this activity in peace- and wartime is the existence of a bilateral program of cooperation (POC), required under the 1946 U.S. Atomic Energy Act as amended in 1958 (see table 7-3).

POCs exist with Belgium, Canada, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, the U.K, and West Germany—but not with South Korea.⁸⁶ Until 1974 the Federal Republic of Germany was in a position similar to that of South Korea with respect to U.S. nuclear artillery, which had been in the country for twenty-five years without legal basis.⁸⁷ How this legal deficiency was rectified in that case is publicly unknown.

Even before the Combined Forces Command was created, State Department officers were troubled by the degree to which the South Korean

Table 7-3
U.S.-Allied Programs of Cooperation

Weapon	Country							
	B	C	GR	I	N	T	UK	FR
AAM	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
SAM	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
AFAP	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SAM-SR	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
MRBM	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y
ASW	N	N	N	Y	—	N	Y	N
GB	Y	N	Y	Y	—	Y	—	Y

Source: D. Cotter, "Peacetime Operations, Safety and Security," in A. Carter, et al., *Managing Nuclear Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1987), p. 42.

Note: B = Belgium, C = Canada, FR = Federal Republic of Germany, GR = Greece, I = Italy, N = Netherlands, T = Turkey, UK = Britain; AAM = anti-air missile, AFAP = artillery-fired atomic projectile, ASW = antisubmarine warfare, GB = gravity bomb, MRBM = medium-range ballistic missile (Pershing II), SAM = surface-to-air missile, SAM-SR = short-range SAM

military had been included in nuclear operations. Said one former official recently:

What does a POC do? It gives a host government access to the numbers, types, locations of nuclear weapons. In Korea, we stopped short of that. But only just. I was absolutely flabbergasted when I found how involved the South Koreans were. I felt that it couldn't be justified without a POC. The army lawyers argued that it could be justified. I felt that they were splitting hairs. I still remember the shock when I found that the South Koreans were doing nuclear training down to the squad level. The army supposes that if they get authority to use nuclear weapons, who's going to give a shit about the POC. In a nuclear war they are probably right as a practical matter.⁸⁸

"The real problem," he continued, "is a crisis in which a defcon [defense condition, a military alert] is reached at which point nuclear weapons are dispersed in accordance with war plans. That's when the legalities become critical. Because that's when people will realize that they may have broken the law."⁸⁹ (This may have happened in the August 1976 Defense Condition 1 alert; see chapters 4 and 8).

Current plans anticipate that South Korean forces will fulfill security functions in wartime at the forward storage locations, and firing sites arguably fall into the category of "controlled nuclear duty."⁹⁰

Personnel with such duties have access to nuclear weapons under the "two man" concept of control over nuclear weapons but do not perform technical operations upon them. Admittedly, NST orders are to keep U.S. custody over nuclear weapons at all times on the two-man rule.⁹¹ But this distinction will become meaningless in the heat of battle when NST units arrive at South Korean artillery sites and rely on them for site security in and around the battery—a contingency that American law requires be covered by a POC/PRP agreement vetted by Congress. In short, the army is asserting that it is not illegal in peacetime to plan to break the law in wartime. This logic is dubious. The army is splitting a hair so thin that it no longer exists.

To date, the army's legal sleight of hand and secrecy has allowed it to circumvent congressional oversight of these activities.⁹² Indeed, as long ago as 1969 then congressional investigator Walter Pincus discovered the joint exercises with dummy nuclear weapons. He later declared, "What was being done violated provisions of the Atomic Energy Act."⁹³ Yet nothing was done to grapple with the real issue: congressional control over the sharing of nuclear technology and information with U.S. allies, and over nuclear strategy and nuclear proliferation policy.

The army cannot evade this issue forever. Of course, the easiest way to deal with it would be to withdraw the weapons as militarily meaning-

less. If military logic does not intervene first, however, eventually the issue will disrupt the alliance—and likely sooner rather than later (see chapter 13).

The South Korean military has already expressed its desire to regain full operational control of its forces. These demands will lead inevitably to demands for further upgrading of nuclear consultation and participation, which in turn will require that Congress approve a program of cooperation with South Korea—an unlikely prospect given widespread congressional skepticism of battlefield nuclear weapons and distrust of the military's role in South Korean politics.

South Korean nationalists in the military therefore will have to choose eventually what they want more: U.S. nuclear extended deterrence under the current arrangement, or full operational control over their own military. Apart from the low probability that Congress would ratify a POC with South Korea, the U.S. military prefers the status quo because a POC would allow the South Koreans more say on nuclear issues and would reduce U.S. leverage in the military-to-military relationship. As one U.S. general put it: "The nuclear training and allowing [South Koreans] access to exotic weapons has an important psychological dimension. The Koreans have put their best people into those units. If we have the slightest complaint, it gets instant attention."⁹⁴ The marriage of narrow military interests implied by such statements represents the core of the nuclear problem in Korea. It is largely responsible for the proliferation prong of the nuclear dilemma in Korea (see chapter 14). The intermingling of American and South Korean nuclear-capable forces entrenches the U.S. Army in its Korean domain.

Until recently, however, this fusion of South Korean and U.S. nuclear warfighting forces has remained mostly hidden from public view. Now, however, an active antinuclear voice in South Korea has begun to challenge this institutional union (chapter 16). Thus, the web of military interrelationships described in this chapter may undermine itself politically and eventually unravel.

8

View from Pyongyang

Whether the U.S. forward deployment [in South Korea] constitutes a provocative posture, of course, is largely a subjective question as it pertains to the future.

—Report to U.S. Army, 1975¹

By definition, nuclear threats are ceaseless psychological assaults on North Koreans. North Korea is unique among small states. No other state has faced four decades of continuous nuclear threat—virtually the entire period of North Korea's independent existence—without a countervailing nuclear retaliatory capability of its own or allied nuclear deployments in its own territory.² Despite its obvious relevance to inquiry into nuclear coercion against nonnuclear states, North Korea's experience since the Korean War has been virtually ignored.³

This chapter identifies the publicly known effects of the nuclear threat on North Korea over four phases since 1953. It describes three categories of effects: North Korean official rhetoric; its provocative actions against the United States and South Korea; and its military reaction.

The lack of hard evidence necessarily renders the inquiry somewhat speculative. Sufficient information, however, is available to identify continuities and changes in the North Korean response to the U.S. nuclear threat. Moreover, it can be shown that the North Korean response corresponds to the contradictory nature of U.S. nuclear strategy in Korea—a strategy in which the shift from nuclear warfighting to nuclear threat has been arrested due to the U.S. Army's organizational interest.

Strategic Prism

North Korean leaders view the world through a strategic prism composed of the institutions and procedures that receive and communicate information about North Korea's security environment, mediated by the personal quirks and psychological predispositions of the leadership, particularly of Kim Il Sung.⁴

Certain themes recur in the rhetoric and action of the North Korean leadership. They always exhibit an intensely nationalistic bent. They strive

for maximum self-reliance. They discount the reliability of deterrence extended by their external allies in light of their strained alliance during the Korean War and since.⁵

They consistently underestimate South Korea's internal resilience in the face of internal social and political instability, thereby overestimating North Korea's potential contribution to a South Korean revolutionary movement. They also underestimate South Korea's political autonomy from the United States and overestimate U.S. influence over events in Seoul.⁶

They hold the United States responsible for the continued division of Korea and perceive a long list of U.S. interventions around the world—including apparently irrational involvements against the United States' "national interest." This behavior confirms their belief that North Korea is number one on a U.S. hit list in Asia, which, should the opportunity arise, the United States will not hesitate to demolish.

Their image of North Korea on the frontline of the antiimperialist movement resonates with Kim Il Sung-ism, the ideology that places North Korea at the center of the civilized universe.⁷ Pyongyang's rhetoric about its external threat mixes fear, bravado, outrage, and frustration, often laced with disparaging comment about the moral character and personal intelligence of foreign leaders.

While these orientations have not changed, North Korea's political line and military strategy have evolved through distinct phases since the Korean War. North Korean rhetoric and actions therefore must be viewed in their historical context, whether domestic or international. This section describes the North Korean reaction in rhetoric, behavior, and military activity to U.S. nuclear threats over four periods, starting at the end of the Korean War.

Phase 1: 1953–1962

Until 1960 North Koreans were absorbed with reconstructing their society. In addition to consolidating North Korean-style socialism, North Korea launched a peace offensive that proposed to reunify Korea by way of an international conference and military force reductions. In 1960 Kim Il Sung articulated his confederal, or two states—one country, concept that has become the mainstay of North Korea's position on reunification.⁸

In this first phase, the nuclear theme did not figure prominently in North Korean rhetoric. That North Korea did not believe that it faced an immediate threat of renewed war is evidenced by the large reduction of its ground forces and the departure in 1958 of Chinese troops—the same year that the United States openly deployed the first nuclear weapons in Korea.

In light of the North Korean fears of nuclear threats made during the Korean War (see chapter 2), however, it is consistent that North Korea complained bitterly on April 7, 1959, that the United States was converting South Korea into a base for nuclear weapons and missiles, thereby violating the armistice.⁹

Second Phase: 1962–1972

The relative calm ended in May 1961 when Park Chung Hee, a hard-line general, grabbed power in Seoul.¹⁰ Within two months of the coup, North Korea signed separate defense treaties with China and the Soviet Union, which were themselves moving toward outright confrontation—another ominous trend for Pyongyang.¹¹ Moreover, Pyongyang believed that the Soviet Union had capitulated to the United States in the Cuban missile crisis, an object lesson for North Korea of the danger of dependence on a great power.¹²

In 1962 Kim Il Sung announced a new, self-reliant military policy that called on ideologically advanced cadres from the military to arm the general population. Henceforth they were to be equipped with weapons made locally.

North Korean memories of nuclear threats during the Korean War had not faded. The nuclear theme figured prominently in the new military line enunciated by Kim Il Sung in 1963:

We have to fortify our entire country. By doing so, we can defeat those who have atomic weapons even though we do not possess them ourselves . . . We have to dig underground tunnels. We have to fortify not only the front line, but also the second or third defense line areas as well as strengthening anti-aircraft and coastline defenses. We have to build many factories under the ground. When we thus fortify the whole country, not even the strongest enemy, not even the Americans, will be able to invade us.¹³

In response, the North Korean military began to prepare seriously for nuclear attack. According to the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, they modeled their response on their Korean War experience. During the war, North Korean doctrine was to use weapon emplacements and communications as the field sites for defense against nuclear attack.¹⁴ Since the war, North Korea appears to have maintained this basic strategy of defending against nuclear radiation and blast by building heavy, deep fortifications. According to the agency:

Current fortifications and obstacles are extensive—the result of over 20 years of careful planning and heavy construction. Fortifications, con-

structed of reinforced concrete, steel, and logs, contain automatic weapons, tank and artillery positions, ammunition storage rooms, and personnel living quarters . . . [Tunnels for frontline infantry 200–1,000 meters beyond the northern edge of the DMZ are closed by heavy steel doors.] Each door is sealed with a rubber gasket to protect the occupants from chemical, bacteriological, and radiological contamination.¹⁵

Yet nuclear threats do not appear to have compelled North Korea to change its whole force structure. States the agency:

Nuclear warfare has not diminished the significance of infantry in the NKA [North Korean Army]. Infantry units have been modernized since the Korean War—mobility, communications, and firepower have been increased—but no radical alterations for nuclear combat have been introduced.¹⁶

Although North Korea has fortified its frontline forces against nuclear attack, there is little hard evidence that North Koreans have prepared for U.S. nuclear attack against their rear areas. They have not, as one might expect from a state facing a nuclear threat, created many mobile and hardened command posts.

Nor, according to U.S. intelligence officials, have they installed nuclear-capable decontamination equipment on installations such as underground sites that store aircraft. This indicator is surmised from the fact that North Korean aircraft have considerable rust maintenance problems when stored underground, indicating that air quality control is unavailable. Air conditioning and pressure control is one way to counter a potential nuclear attack and would evidence a perception of a nuclear threat.

Instead, they appear to have concentrated upon the battlefield, drawing on their Korean War experience [described in chapter 2]. Thus, North Korean troops train for defensive nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare. As the agency puts it,

During war, the NKA [North Korean Army] would conduct constant reconnaissance to detect contamination, immediately warn troops endangered by nuclear, biological, or chemical attacks; and construct shelters and issue mask and protective clothing to reduce or neutralize the effects of such attacks. Hardened infantry, armor, and artillery positions are elaborately designed to protect troops from unconventional weapons.¹⁷

Continues the agency:

If a unit is threatened by nuclear warfare while it is in a defensive situation, troops are ordered to take cover in tunnels and underground fortifications, trenches, or low places on the ground. If caught in an open

field, they lie prone, facing away from the point of impact, and remain that way for approximately 3 seconds. They then rise, don gas masks, and return to their normal defensive duties.¹⁸

North Korean doctrine also contains pathetic procedures for hasty, local decontamination: "Small units can comply [with instructions] by shaking, dusting, scrubbing with grass, twigs, etc., or by any other improvised means, so that combat missions can be continued without delay."¹⁹ During offensive operations, North Korean troops are to be warned of imminent nuclear attack, ordered to don gas masks, and continue the assault.

In the second half of the 1960s, North Korea resorted to an intense campaign of sabotage and guerrilla infiltration against the south that culminated on the attempt to assassinate President Park Chung Hee in January 1968. Kim Il Sung may have thought that he could light a southern tinderbox because of the student revolts and pervasive opposition to Park's rule after 1964.

Concurrently with these incursions, North Korea also launched two major attacks on the United States. These two events are especially relevant to an analysis of the effects of nuclear threats on North Koreans.

The first attack occurred in January 1968 when North Korea seized the USS *Pueblo*, a U.S. spyship sailing in international waters. Plainly, North Korea was not deterred from taking this action by U.S. military threats. In response, the Johnson administration ordered three aircraft carrier groups to sail off the North Korean coast and deployed strategic bombers to the West Pacific to coerce Pyongyang to release the U.S. vessel.²⁰

This display of nuclear-capable power failed dismally to achieve its goal. Pyongyang kept the ship and released the crew only after a year. The episode directly contradicts the notion that indirect nuclear threats could compel Pyongyang to comply with U.S. wishes.

What explains this attack? First, North Korea may have purposely set out to embarrass its allies who were already competing for U.S. favor in the nascent great-power triangle. Second, North Korea was alarmed by Japan's recrudescing military power and the United States' successful attempt to normalize relations between Japan and South Korea in 1965. If North Korea was aiming to advertise the risks of third-party behavior by attacking the United States, then U.S. forces may have provided opportunities to North Korea rather than deterring a pending invasion of South Korea. Third, North Korea may have been testing U.S. resolve to defend South Korea, as the attack occurred at almost the same time as the attempt to kill Park.

A similar U.S. force gathered in April the next year after North Korea downed an unarmed U.S. EC-121 spyplane. North Korea linked the attack to the commencement in mid-March of the U.S. Focus Retina exercise that

airlifted U.S. paratroopers from the continental United States to South Korea for the first time.²¹

In this case, the Nixon administration countenanced a range of retaliatory options including strategic bombing of North Korean cities. U.S. National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger was advised that the planned retaliation could lead to war and the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Korea. Nonetheless, he and President Richard Nixon were prepared to take whatever steps were necessary to bring North Korea to its knees. They ordered the navy to position another enormous armada in readiness for retaliation. Before they could act, however, the American media and Congress praised Nixon for his restraint, preempting further action.²² All the bluster about nuclear weapons was to no avail, and no compellence was attempted or achieved.

As with the 1976 altercation (see below), the North Koreans had lost control over a single plane, which fired on the doomed EC- 121.²³ As North Korea intended to attack neither South Korea nor even the spy-plane, general deterrence was irrelevant in this case. In Pyongyang, however, the event was taken as demonstrating a foiled U.S. attempt to attack North Korea with nuclear weapons.²⁴

Overall, these two confrontations showed that strategic nuclear forces from outside Korea were either irrelevant to North Korean propensity to attack U.S. forces or failed to deter or compel North Korea from launching attacks and exploiting the crises for its own ends.

The effect of general nuclear deterrence on North Korea's intentions to attack South Korea at this time is another matter. North Korea's irregular warfare attacks on the south after 1966 are *prima facie* evidence of aggressive goals, although not necessarily of intent to attack with conventional means that could be targeted with nuclear weapons. As the incursions were purposeful and sustained, there is no doubt that nuclear threats did not deter them.

But did nuclear threats still deter a conventional attack on South Korea? North Korea's resort to irregular warfare suggests that North Korea's residual intentions to attack with conventional forces was already blocked by conventional capabilities in the south to defend and retaliate. No sooner had they arrived than nuclear weapons were redundant for deterrence.

Phase 3: 1972–1978

Low-level harassment petered out in 1972 when North Korea shifted to a two-track policy of dialogue and diatribe. Kim Il Sung and Park Chung Hee met, issuing a remarkable joint statement on reunifying Korea. At the

same time, North Korea commenced a major arms buildup and allegedly dug infiltration tunnels under the demilitarized zone.

Numerous explanations, all them speculative, have been given for the policy shift from low-level harassment to a military buildup between 1972 and 1978. The most obvious factor was that North Korea's revolutionary line had not gripped the hearts and minds of the South Korean population. Guerrillas and agents were systematically hunted down and ruthlessly crushed, providing the South Korean regime with an excuse to suppress many South Korean dissidents along the way.

Second, Nixon's much delayed \$4 billion military aid package to the south to compensate for the Seventh Infantry Division had begun to flow. The aid prefigured the establishment of a South Korean arms industry and rearmament program that boded ill for North Korea. Moreover, the possibility of total U.S. withdrawal was still on the cards in 1972-75. Although Pyongyang viewed South Korea as a U.S. puppet, the associated loss of U.S. restraint over the increasingly strong South Korean military which would accompany withdrawal must have crossed the minds of North Korean leaders. The discovery of a South Korean nuclear weapons program in 1975 must have further alarmed North Korea, already angered that Park Chung Hee had used the 1972 rapprochement as an excuse to declare martial law in the south.

A third reason that North Korea may have continued to arm between 1972 and 1978 was that Pyongyang may have seen South Korea's military trajectory as a U.S. plot eventually to "unleash" Park Chung Hee on North Korea—that is, as a policy of proxy rollback.

That North Korea may be frightened of a combined U.S.—South Korean attack appears ridiculous to many Americans who believe that it is self-evident that "everyone" knows their intentions are defensive, not offensive.

From the North Korean perspective, however, the benign nature of U.S. and South Korean intentions may not be so obvious. Isolated from world opinion, subject to the vagaries of centralized, bureaucratic policy formation and the whim of extraordinarily concentrated political power, Pyongyang is the one place that probably does not see the world the same way as "everyone" else.

In fact, North Korean fears may be quite valid. U.S. policymakers privately justify their continued command of South Korean forces as reigning in possible South Korean military adventurism against North Korea. They cite U.S. command as having restrained the South Korean military in 1969, 1976, and 1983. Indeed, one report to the U.S. Army states explicitly that

it has long been perceived by the ROK leadership that one of the key

roles played by the CINCUNC is prevention of unilateral South Korean decisions to react militarily against the North. The existing situation, with U.S. combat ground forces present and the American commander clearly in the command decision role, is understood and accepted by the ROK.²⁵

If these self-serving claims by the U.S. military are true, then North Korea has good reason to be concerned about possible South Korean attack. In the same vein, North Korea may have had authentic even if unfounded fear that Park Chung Hee might provoke a war, not to retaliate for a northern provocation, but to thwart domestic opposition.²⁶

The North Koreans also have to defend the territory between Pyongyang and the demilitarized zone. A loss of any territory to the south could be a mortal blow to the North Korean state, which has staked its legitimacy on protecting the homeland. This issue is not academic. As a former U.S. commander in Korea said, "There's nothing sacred about what is nothing more than a military demarcation line. It's not a political boundary."²⁷

Ironically, well-meaning U.S. assurances that the United States harbors no ambitions to reunify Korea may reinforce rather than reduce North Korean fears. U.S. diplomats argue that politicians would never give the green light to attack Pyongyang as called for in the war plan. Instead, they aver reassuringly, they would only allow the military to move the demilitarized zone halfway to Pyongyang!²⁸ This strategy aims, according to two senior U.S. strategists, "to achieve the military advantages that can ensure a more stable territorial settlement"—that is, to move the demilitarized zone closer to Pyongyang.²⁹ This kind of open conjecture is unlikely to convince North Koreans that they have no reason to fear U.S. intentions.

Finally, North Korea may have worried that the United States itself might attack. After 1972, the United States was no longer embroiled in Indochina. U.S. forces that were removed posed a greater potential threat to North Korea. Moreover, American leaders were paying increased attention to events in Korea, revising and reorganizing operational aspects of nuclear strategy in the peninsula. From the North Korean perspective, this activity may have posed the possibility that the United States might use nuclear weapons to achieve victory after launching a conventional attack on North Korea that falters.³⁰

For all these reasons, North Korea continued to arm itself throughout the 1970s. At the 355th meeting of the Military Armistice Commission on October 25, 1974, the North Koreans also revealed continuing sensitivity to the nuclear threat. They charged that the United States had introduced nuclear bombs and warheads into South Korea. They also denounced the October 4, 1974, visit of the USS *Midway* to Pusan, alleging that it carried nuclear warheads.

The following December 20, the north repeated these allegations. The north then charged that UN Command had deployed nuclear weapons in frontline areas near the military demarcation line, and demanded that these weapons be withdrawn.³¹ Both these events, however, lacked the fury of later antinuclear pronouncements. Rather than expressing fear of imminent nuclear attack, the North Koreans appear to have been capitalizing on statements about nuclear weapons in the Far East by the unofficial Center for Defense Information in Washington.

In 1975, however, the North Koreans were again the target of explicit U.S. nuclear threats (chapter 4). Likely in response to this campaign, North Korean propaganda referred directly to the nuclear issue on July 20, 1976:

By distorting facts, the U.S. imperialists attribute their defeat in Indochina to their reluctant involvement in a war of conventional arms. Raving that in South Korea they will not hesitate to use nuclear arms in the event of a war, the U.S. imperialists have introduced nuclear weapons into South Korea and have deployed them in the vicinity of the military demarcation line. They are also building nuclear bases at various places in South Korea including the area of Mt. Sobaek.³²

The same month, Kim Il Sung played down the nuclear threat with sheer bravado: "Even if war bursts forth in Korea, they would not be able to use nuclear weapons. How can they use nuclear weapons here in Korea when friend and foe will grapple each other? Should the enemy use nuclear weapons he will also get killed."³³

Throughout that year, the North Korean media contained much rhetoric against U.S. and South Korean "lackeys" but little on nuclear weapons.

The Axes of August

The Ford administration issued a variety of nuclear threats against north Korea during 1975–76 (chapter 4). These threats did not prevent the August 1976 attack at Panmunjom. On August 18, two American GIs pruning a poplar tree in the demilitarized zone were clubbed to death with ax handles wielded by North Korean assailants. The United States again mobilized massive naval-nuclear power in the Sea of Japan and invoked the nuclear threat to compel North Korea to apologize for the incident (chapter 4). U.S. Forces in Korea itself were alerted to Defense Condition 3, halfway between peacetime status and wartime alert, where they remained until September 8.³⁴ In addition to B-52 bombers, F-111s, and F-4 jets sent to Korea, 12,000 ground troops were ordered to Korea (including 1,800 marines from Okinawa).³⁵ On August 21, without prior notification

of North Korea, a team of U.S. and South Korean troops entered the joint security area at Panmunjom under the cover of hovering helicopter gunships and strategic and tactical bombers circling within eyesight from North Korea and backed up by a quick reaction force of 300 combat ground troops. After cutting down the offending poplar tree, they pronounced that Operation Paul Bunyan was over.³⁶

Unlike 1968, this attempt was crowned with partial success when Kim Il Sung expressed backhanded regret for the incident. This admission caused him to lose so much face that the U.S. military interpreted it as a "victory" for the United States.³⁷

At the time, U.S. officials said that the attack was a premeditated political maneuver whereby Pyongyang sought "an incident which could be used extensively in their propaganda efforts to depict us as seeking war on the peninsula." As evidence for this thesis, they cited North Korea's anti-American propaganda campaign that began earlier that month.³⁸ Even outraged congressmen found this thesis unlikely, asking an administration official, "They thought we could blow up one of their cities, all go to war and enjoy it?"³⁹

In reality, there is no evidence that the North Koreans ever intended to attack the south (why tip off your adversary?). The provocation was more likely the result of tension in the joint security area at Panmunjom in which North Korea lost control of its frontline troops. The attack followed the first visit of nuclear-capable F-111 bombers from Idaho to Osan Air Base in February (which were recalled to Korea in the August crisis), and the commencement of the Team Spirit exercise in June⁴⁰—both events that threatened North Korea and raised tensions along the demilitarized zone.

Although U.S. accounts assiduously deny any American fault in this event, U.S. military officers admit privately that those involved in the pruning did not follow normal consultative procedures and verbally heightened the animosity that led to the fighting.⁴¹ Although some portray the violence as a deliberate, premeditated act, there is only circumstantial evidence (prompt propaganda radio broadcasts) that Pyongyang ordered North Korean guards to attack and kill Americans over the cutting down of the poplar tree.

In fact, the threats employed *did* compel North Korea to comply with U.S. wishes by forcing Kim Il Sung to express regret at the incident. As with the 1968 and 1969 incidents, however, there is no evidence that North Korea ever intended to attack the south. If this thesis is true, then deterrence did not fail in this case but was simply irrelevant.

Ironically, the successful compulsion of North Korea was not sought to stop further incidents but to make President Gerald Ford look tough in comparison with his competitors for office. Not surprisingly, the army in

Korea relished this task. When the U.S. Joint Chiefs cabled Stilwell asking how he proposed to respond to the provocation, he replied that he intended to cut down the tree. The Joint Chiefs then cabled back, "What if the North Koreans oppose you?" To this, the general reportedly responded, "I have fourteen battalions of artillery trained on the tree. I will blow both the tree and them away."⁴²

In spite of the grave confrontation, the north's reaction barely mentioned nuclear weapons and then only as an example of U.S. aggression. The major North Korean reference to the nuclear element after the August 18 incident was in a resolution proposed (and accepted) by the Non-aligned Conference in Colombo that stated: "The imperialists have turned South Korea into a military base for aggression and a base for nuclear attack by extensively introducing more and more armed forces and mass-destruction weapons, including nuclear weapons."⁴³ Reference to socialist nuclear retaliation to U.S. nuclear attack on North Korea was also noticeably lacking. Instead, North Korean propaganda suggested that North Korea would defeat a southern invasion with a "people's war."

Two aspects of this event suggest that North Korea was genuinely fearful that the incident might escalate into nuclear war. First, their verbal capitulation was unprecedented, implying that Kim Il Sung judged the threat to be greater than in the *Pueblo* and EC-121 crises. Second, their conspicuous rhetorical silence on the nuclear element implies that North Korea had decided that drawing attention to it would only encourage the United States to use it again. North Koreans who reflected on the disproportionate U.S. response to the incident might be excused for wondering about the mental health of American leaders. After all, ax handles simply do not compare to B-52 bombers.

Military Buildup

Throughout this period, North Korea filled out its military posture with a major defense-in-depth capability. These forces were all found in rear areas of North Korea. U.S. intelligence analysts, however, argued that because they were coupled to offensive forces, the rear forces were also offensive.⁴⁴

The Carter administration posed the least immediate threat to North Korea of any since 1950. However, the package of arms transfers and military aid that was to placate South Korea, vexed by the departure of the Second Division, further alarmed Pyongyang, already slipping behind in the economic race with the south. Indeed, the Carter administration that began its Korea policy with human rights and troop withdrawal ended by embracing a new military strongman and sending more arms to Korea than any previous administration.⁴⁵

The new hard-line military posture adopted by Carter in 1978 was quickly reflected in North Korean rhetoric. Radio Pyongyang, for example, called the 1978 Team Spirit exercise

a frenzied war racket to invade the northern half of the republic and a full-scale preparatory and experimental war against the DPRK. Mobilizing and conducting launching exercises of the Lance missile, which can carry nuclear warheads, particularly bared the U.S. imperialists dark intentions to provoke even nuclear war in Korea.⁴⁶

By the end of the Carter administration, geopolitical shifts left North Korea isolated and exposed to resurgent U.S. power in East Asia (chapter 11). It seems likely that North Korea's reported military forward deployment after 1978 was a reaction to these developments. In 1980 North Korea perceived itself to be standing alone, trapped between the Sino-Soviet conflict to the north, flanked by the Sino-American alignment to the west and Japan to the east, and facing a million hostile soldiers to the south. "If we do not make the correct moves," a North Korean spokesperson told an Italian delegation in February, "we run the risk of being crushed or sold."⁴⁷

Phase 4: 1980–1989

In 1981 a sharp change in the content and style of the antinuclear rhetoric issued in Pyongyang became evident. In March the North Korean Workers' party and the Japan Socialist party jointly called for a nuclear-free zone in Northeast Asia. The two parties declared:

It goes without saying that if a war breaks out in this region where the U.S. imperialists have deployed nuclear weapons in South Korea, Japan proper and Okinawa and [where they] stage nuclear war exercises, it will develop into a nuclear war and will not be confined to a local war but [will] be expanded into a global arms conflict.⁴⁸

In the early years of the Reagan administration, nuclear issues did not figure centrally in anti-American statements. Nonetheless, the North Koreans referred to President Reagan as "a war maniac hell-bent on kindling the flame of war at any cost" in South Korea.⁴⁹ "Reagan is a fanatic of dangerous nuclear war," stressed one article, "who does not hesitate to impose a holocaust of nuclear war upon mankind for an aggressive purpose."⁵⁰ They also called the 1981 U.S.–South Korean Team Spirit exercise "a nuclear war exercise."⁵¹

In 1983 Pyongyang's antinuclear campaign reached a strident crescendo. Virtually every article on the U.S. or South Korean threat de-

nounced U.S. nuclear weapons, asserting that more than one thousand weapons stationed in South Korea are frequently involved in exercises that are dry runs for a “nuclear test war” in Korea. In May they asserted that the United States is “working overtime to start a nuclear war in our country.” They warned the United States that nuclear adventurism “will only precipitate their final destruction.”⁵²

In June 1983 the *Pyongyang Times* denounced the U.S.–South Korean–Japanese strategic triangle as “a nuclear war alliance.” “As those who like to play with fire would perish in fire,” they concluded, “so those who brandish nuclear weapons would receive a volley of nuclear fire”—an indirect allusion to Soviet and Chinese nuclear forces.⁵³

People’s war, it seemed, was no longer a sufficient deterrent to U.S. nuclear attack. North Korean leaders evidently felt sufficiently threatened to invoke allied extended nuclear deterrence in spite of the suggestion of dependence contained in this reference.

In 1983 North Korea’s line also shifted from dialogue plus diatribe to talking while bombing. That year, North Korean agents allegedly bombed the South Korean cabinet at Rangoon, killing many and narrowly missing the southern president. By definition, military threats had not deterred this action. As nobody knew who exactly had instigated the outrage, the United States did not mobilize its forces in reaction, and no immediate deterrence or compellence was attempted—much to the disgust of South Koreans.

By 1986 North Korean propaganda referred to nuclear war rather than southern invasion as the primary threat. Attacking the U.S. “nuclear umbrella,” North Koreans argued that global nuclear war could start in Korea: “The U.S. imperialists have chosen not only the northern half of Korea but also its neighboring countries as targets of their nuclear attack. Under such condition[s], if a nuclear war broke out in Korea, it would easily expand into a global thermonuclear war.”⁵⁴ In the course of their attack on U.S. nuclear deterrence, they made explicit their belief that China and the Soviet Union would retaliate in kind: “Nuclear weapons are not a monopoly of the U.S. imperialists today. It is clear to everyone that, if a war in Korea turned into a nuclear war, South Korea where nuclear weapons are deployed would suffer a nuclear strike before anywhere else.”⁵⁵ Invoking extended deterrence from their allies rather than people’s war was a radical shift for North Korea which flew in the face of Kim Il Sung’s ideology of self-reliance. This rhetorical shift, therefore, is strong prima facie evidence that Pyongyang was genuinely frightened of U.S. attack in 1983.

They also kept antinuclear propaganda at a high pitch, accusing the United States of wanting to use South Korea as a “nuclear lighting conductor” where it could “ignite a nuclear war on the Korean soil far away

from the United States.”⁵⁶ The following October North Korea and the Soviet Union navies held their first ever large-scale exercise in the Sea of Japan.

North Korea also introduced the nuclear issue into proposals for talks with the United States in June 1986, calling for a nuclear-free zone in Korea. In September North Korea hosted the first of a series of Pyongyang-sponsored international conferences on denuclearizing Korea.⁵⁷

By the end of 1987, they began to depict Korea as “the 1st line of US strategy.” They contended that the combat radius of the U.S. F-16 bombers extended beyond the north, proving that the United States was targeting “other countries” than Korea. This time, they declared that a U.S. nuclear attack on these countries would result in a “nuclear retaliatory blow and . . . will give rise to a world-wide nuclear confrontation sweeping Asia and the whole world.”⁵⁸

North Koreans allegedly bombed Seoul’s international airport in November 1987, followed the next month by a KAL airliner. Like that in Rangoon, these actions were again aimed at South Korea rather than the United States. Assuming it was responsible, North Korea may have aimed to disrupt the Seoul Olympics the following June. Alternatively, it may have been firing a shot across the United States’ bow in response to the U.S. military’s announcement that it would assemble a huge military force during the games. Or, the North Koreans may have wanted to pressure China and the Soviet Union to not send athletes to the Olympics. Which-ever is true, the United States had not deterred the north from these actions. Again, putative deterrence had either failed or was nonexistent, and the United States did not seek immediate compellence or deterrence after these events.

In 1988 North Korea reissued its charge that the United States was engaged in “reckless machinations” with bellicose South Koreans “to provoke a nuclear war.”⁵⁹ Somewhat in contradiction to their overall emphasis, they also asserted that Koreans are “not frightened by the atomic bomb.”⁶⁰

In 1988 the antinuclear refrain from Pyongyang became distinctly less frantic. In June, the North Koreans argued that the INF agreement rendered redundant any U.S. nuclear weapons in Korea aimed at the Soviet Union.⁶¹ In July they conceded that U.S. withdrawal was contingent upon north-south force reductions—a major softening of North Korea’s position. “The north and south shall make a phased and drastic reduction of their armed forces,” they suggested, “and simultaneously take measures to withdraw stage by stage foreign forces and nuclear weapons present in the area of the Korean Peninsula.”⁶²

The United States and South Korea might be forgiven for being skeptical as to the sincerity of this proposal, however. For the following

September, North Korea was condemning Seoul as a U.S. “puppet regime” and “nothing but a colony of the United States.”⁶³

Of course, words are cheap—on both sides. Rather than expressions of genuine fear of nuclear attack, North Korea’s statements may be designed to exploit antinuclear sentiments in the south and abroad. Certainly this was the intent, for example, of a letter Pyongyang sent to South Korean political parties and social groups in January 1977 which demanded the abolition of “nuclear bases” in South Korea. Since 1977 North Korean demands for withdrawal of U.S. forces from the south have always been linked to the nuclear issue.⁶⁴ Moreover, if North Koreans really believed that Reagan was the world’s most bellicose nuclear war fanatic, these insults were most imprudent.

In 1989 North Korea vented a stream of denunciations of the South Korean regime. Pyongyang’s propagandists even tried to link U.S. nuclear deterrence with the South Korean regime’s domestic survival, claiming that it was kept in power by the United States’ “nuclear umbrella.”⁶⁵

North Korea’s rhetoric is also matched by actions that cannot be explained only in terms of propaganda.

In 1986, for example, the year that Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger reiterated that “the U.S. nuclear umbrella . . . provide[s] additional security to the Republic of Korea,” North Korea responded to the Team Spirit exercise by going onto “enhanced Revolutionary alert posture.”⁶⁶ The mobilization included diverting scarce labor from factories to military tasks, and stocking hospitals with medicine and bandages.

This alert might be explained in part as an effort to manipulate North Korean public opinion by beating the drum of external threat. But the high cost and the social disruption caused by the alerts also reminded the North Korean population that their Great Leader Kim Il Sung could not protect them against nuclear attack, undermining his legitimacy. Rand Corporation analyst Herbert Goldhamer had justified nuclear threats during the Korean War with precisely this argument. It is more likely, therefore, that the alert was motivated by real paranoia about U.S. intentions.

In 1989 the north again accused the United States of mounting the Team Spirit exercise as a rehearsal for “an all-out attack on the northern half of the country by a nuclear preemptive strike.”⁶⁷ And on March 11 North Korean forces were again alerted by the North Korean Supreme Command. It ordered all units to prepare for combat “with a high degree of revolutionary vigilance” in light of “the danger of nuclear war”⁶⁸

This time, North Korea declared the alert so as to blame Seoul for the failure of north-south talks, the talks having been canceled by Pyongyang at the start of Team Spirit. But in 1989 North Korean comments about nuclear war and Team Spirit were also unusually specific, providing insight into North Korean fears. In an interview, North Korean general Kim

Yong Chol explained why Pyongyang viewed Team Spirit 89 as a nuclear offensive war game:

The B-52 strategic bombers also conduct bombardment training in Team Spirit. The B-52s . . . are capable of carrying nuclear weapons. They fly from Guam first to the sky above Cheju Island and cross the central part of south Korea and conduct bombardment exercises when [they come] to Asan Bay. What should be noted is that the distance from Guam to Asan Bay is exactly the same as that from Guam to Pyongyang. We pay special attention to the flying distance of the B-52s. This shows that they will strike Pyongyang in an instant, possibly with nuclear weapons.⁶⁹

Some U.S. intelligence officials at least regard the alerts as evidence of genuine North Korean fear of attack. It is incredible that the North Koreans would not have recalled the simulated nuclear bombing runs during the Korean War, the mobilization of B-52s from Guam during the 1969 EC-121 confrontation in which the Nixon administration considered using nuclear weapons against them, and the flights during the 1976 incident on the demilitarized zone. Ironically, by the time General Kim made his remarks, the U.S. Air Force had already converted the B-52s in Guam to nonnuclear missions and had dismantled the nuclear storage magazine at Anderson Air Field.

Conclusion

Some tentative conclusions may be drawn from this account of North Korea's rhetorical, behavioral, and military response to U.S. nuclear threats since the Korean War.

First, the North Korean military have prepared for the contingency of U.S. nuclear attack with extensive fortifications, training, and doctrinal innovations. This bedrock of military response that began shortly after nuclear weapons arrived in Korea indicates that U.S. nuclear threats are being noted in Pyongyang.

Which threats are taken seriously, however, is another matter. Some evidence cited above suggests that Pyongyang is primarily concerned about defeating U.S. nuclear attack on its frontline troops and launched from delivery systems based in Korea. Other evidence points to North Korea's having adopted a social defense in response to the nuclear threat posed by U.S. strategic nuclear forces based outside Korea.

North Korean behavior toward U.S. nuclear-capable forces in and around Korea reinforces the conclusion that occasional U.S. nuclear threat displays for immediate compellence or deterrence have little credibility and possibly even draw North Korean fire for reasons unrelated to the U.S.

threat per se. As will be argued in the next two chapters, however, such threats may also prompt North Korea to forward-deploy offensive forces to deter and preempt nuclear attack, as well as play a waiting game in South Korea.

The events of August 1976 suggest that the U.S. Army's nuclear warfighting forces based in Korea may be especially worrisome to Pyongyang, probably because they virtually commit the United States to engage should a war erupt. The 1976 crisis demonstrated clearly the dangers of inadvertent war due to loss of control. Thereafter, if not before, Kim Il Sung would have been obliged to assume that whatever his intentions, the North might have to fight nuclear war in Korea. Nor could he have failed to notice the inconsistency between the United States' rhetorical shift from nuclear warfighting to deterrence threats in Europe, and its political practice and doctrinal shift back to nuclear warfighting for compellence in Korea.

Rhetorically, North Korea has reacted to nuclear threats by emphasizing different themes according to the particular circumstances. At times, however, its rhetoric revealed genuine fears of nuclear attack, especially during the Reagan administration.

In summary, the historical evidence reveals a mix of motives for North Korea's military, rhetorical and behavioral reaction to nuclear threat. The military reaction has been constant; the rhetorical reaction has risen and fallen; and the attacks on U.S. forces have had no particular rhythm but have erupted unpredictably due to loss of control, sending messages to third parties, use in factional struggles, and firing shots across the U.S. bow.

The next chapter will explore whether these reactions show that U.S. nuclear threats enabled the United States to deter or compel North Korea.

Hall of Mirrors

North Korea would only attack today if they are mad. If they are mad, nuclear weapons won't deter them.

—Former U.S. State Department official,
November 16, 1987

To most American officials, the impact of nuclear threats on North Koreans is simple. “Despite the increasing strength of South Korean military formations,” writes Thomas Robinson, a U.S. strategic analyst, “it is the American nuclear threat that so far has kept the North from attempting to conquer the South.”¹

They assume that North Korea retains aggressive intentions toward the south, intentions that are matched by an offensive military posture that may be employed directly or indirectly. For them, the main rationale for the nuclear threats against North Korea is to counter these North Korean military forces.

Unfortunately, determining the impact of nuclear threats against states is not so simple. Indeed, recent studies have shown that military threats often have unexpected or counterproductive effects, or, even more surprising to many military analysts, no deterrent effect at all.²

In fact, we will probably never know what North Koreans really think about the U.S. nuclear threat. They may be ill-informed, confused, or may differ among themselves as to its significance. U.S. officials admit that it is impossible to prove that North Korea is deterred by nuclear weapons rather than some other constraint.

“Nuclear deterrence in Korea,” said one U.S. diplomat, “is like asking a man on a bus in New York City why he’s throwing white powder out the window. ‘It’s to keep the lions out of New York City,’ he replies. ‘But there are no lions in New York City,’ you respond. ‘You see?’ the man says. ‘It works.’”³

Yet ascertaining North Korean intentions is crucial in determining if North Korea is indeed a lion waiting to spring over the demilitarized zone or a frightened cat yowling from a tree at a snarling dog pacing below.

Determining the impact of a threat is like tracking a moving target. The intentions of the targeted state determine the psychological and be-

havioral effects of a threat. Impact and intentions, therefore, are inextricably linked in analysis.

Denied access to North Korean minds and archives, the investigator must refer instead to disparate indicators to test different theories of intention. In turn, which theory of North Korean intention is adopted determines what may be asserted validly about the impact of nuclear threats on North Korea.

This chapter marshals three types of evidence described in earlier chapters: North Korea's antinuclear rhetoric; its provocative actions against U.S. forces; and its military preparations to fight under nuclear attack. It uses these indicators to test three theories of North Korean intentions called the blitz, the waiting game, and the siege mentality.

Blitz

In this theory, North Korea is held to intend to invade South Korea without warning at the first available opportunity.⁴ Its proponents believe, as one diplomat put it, "that there has been no diminution in North Korea's determination to achieve the reunification of the peninsula on its own terms."⁵ As former U.S. commander in Korea, Gen. William Livsey, said in July 1984, "Kim Il Sung's leadership remains dedicated to the same thing it was when his tanks rolled south 34 years ago—and that is communist control of the entire peninsula."⁶

In this view, North Korea's strategy is simple. It is geared up to launch an all-out, surprise attack without warning. In this nightmare scenario, North Korean commandos would hit southern command posts, airfields, and retreating forces from behind southern lines. By grabbing Seoul in a few days, they could negotiate a settlement with the United States before it could reinforce or escalate to nuclear retaliation.⁷

U.S. analysts have consistently argued that the North Koreans are superior in the overall numerical force ratios required for a blitz attack over the western DMZ down the main invasion corridors to Seoul.⁸ This strategy is also consistent with Chinese and Soviet doctrine, which the U.S. Army believes informs North Korean military philosophy.⁹

This interpretation discounts *all* North Korean antinuclear rhetoric as simply manipulation of international and domestic opinion. The twelve major attacks against Americans since 1953 and listed by the Eighth U.S. Army are said to show that deterrence has succeeded, not failed.¹⁰ In this vein, North Korean provocations and resort to guerrilla strategy or terrorism are seen as an *outcome* of continuously operating successful deterrence, a sort of release valve for pent-up North Korean frustration in the face of successful southern deterrence. "In a three-front war," says a

former senior Pentagon official, “where the North Koreans are going hammer and tongs at infiltrating, it will be hard to use nuclear weapons. That’s why they do it all the time.”¹¹

Deterrence and Compellence, Blitz Version

In the blitz theory, the North Korean threat of invasion without warning is represented as continuous. So too, therefore, southern military capabilities continuously deter North Korea from attacking. An often held related belief is that U.S.–South Korean combined forces are substantially inferior to North Korea’s forces. Due to this deficiency, conventional deterrence is held to be substantially short of that required to deter North Korea. Nuclear deterrence therefore “balances the books.”

Alternately, because the conventional balance is held to be uncertain, nuclear threats provide “insurance” against North Koreans thinking erroneously that they might have gained a margin of superiority capable of winning victory.

In this account, it was and is necessary to invoke nuclear threats to end crises. Immediate compellence is best gained by the threat of warfighting. Ending North Korean transgressions of the containment line therefore required running the risk of further escalation, as in the 1976 ax crisis. The cost of stability at higher levels of the escalation ladder was and is greater instability at lower levels of violence.

By this logic, no *immediate* deterrence was achieved by nuclear threats made in the midst of crisis, since North Korean provocations are held to be irrational outbursts of anger rather than expressions of intent to attack (why give early warning of a pending surprise blitz attack?). Moreover, the distinction between general and immediate deterrence collapses in this theory because immediate deterrence is said to be operating all the time.

Plausibility

This portrayal is useful for drum-beating purposes in Seoul and Washington. Few insiders, however, believe that North Korea really plans to launch a blitz attack. In June 1976, for example, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency concluded that

a military option of limited scope and intensity which would not be perceived by Pyongyang as leading to rapid and uncontrolled escalation, remains a possibility if Kim wishes to probe US resolve to stand by its defense commitment, and to test ROK-US military and political reactions, or to influence and focus world opinion on a real or imagined North Korean grievance. The likelihood, however, that the North would now

risk a major confrontation with United Nations Command (UNC) forces without considerable prior preparation for the potential consequences is considered remote.¹²

Assuming Kim Il Sung is rational, said former U.S. deputy commander in Korea, Gen. Winfield Scott in 1983, "Kim Il Sung will not attack. I'll bet anything on it."¹³ This judgment flows from the fact, as one Pentagon official put it in June 1987, that "they don't know how the crazy Americans might respond to their actions. It's a fact that we responded in 1950. It's a fact that we destroyed their country, leveled their cities with our bombs and the navy's shelling."¹⁴

In addition to these considerations, North Korea also lacks automatic allied support necessary to launch a direct attack on South Korea. Nor, as is shown in the next chapter, can it muster sufficient military power to be certain of successfully invading the south, with or without allied support.

Finally, if North Korea is about to invade the south, the blitz theory cannot explain why North Korea would rhetorically exclaim its fears of nuclear attack. According to the blitz theory, nuclear threats deter North Korea. Why, one must ask, would North Korea advertize its sensitivity to such threats, encouraging the United States to persist in the practice?

Waiting Game

According to the second theory, Kim Il Sung is playing a waiting game. He is not about to attack without warning. But when and if a chance comes by, he will mobilize his forces to grab it.

Kim Il Sung is hovering ready to pounce, a former U.S. commander in Korea stated recently, until the moment when he can "generate or capitalize on malaise in the South Korean body politic. Then he's in the position to quickly come to the aid and rescue of the 'legitimate' aspirations of the South Korean population."¹⁵

In this scenario, Kim Il Sung is banking on full-scale rebellion breaking out in the south. Then, northern commandos could intervene in small groups directly or by strengthening the rebels' hands. American firepower would be least effective against these forces, which are highly trained and very tough. The rest of the northern forces would "lean" on the demilitarized zone to keep the bulk of the south's forces unavailable for internal repression of the rebels. The north would wait for the southern house of cards to collapse, forcing the United States to disengage. At the right moment, North Korean infantry and armor would occupy Seoul after punching through U.S. and South Korean defenses.

Ambiguity

A strategy of indirect attack has the additional advantage of ambiguity: North Korea cannot expect that the Soviet Union or China would back an all-out attack on South Korea. A low-level intervention, however, could preserve North Korea's security alliances. At the same time, the United States might find it difficult to support a South Korean regime that would be seen to be fighting its own populace rather than northern aggression.

Yet another version of the waiting game theory argues that the cutting edge of North Korean forces are not the heavy armor and artillery deployed north of Seoul, but the light infantry and commando forces. In wartime, these forces would attack over the mountainous terrain in the eastern half of the demilitarized zone. If successful, they would either force South Korea to divert forces away from the positional defense of Seoul, or they would open up corridors through which armored forces could flow into flanking attacks on the defensive forces between Seoul and the demilitarized zone.¹⁶

Advantages offered by this strategy are that it would evade U.S. and South Korean superiority in attritional firepower and would be amenable to phased escalation in light of political conditions. Only in the last phase, all-out attack, would armored forces concentrate north of Seoul. Preceded by special forces that would disable tank barriers and disrupt the rear of positional defenses, the tanks would be used to deliver the coup de grace rather than conduct a set-piece war suited to the southern strategy of attrition through massive firepower.¹⁷

Blocked, North Korea plays a waiting game with its offensive forces. Meanwhile, the North Korean military "overhang" ensures that the southern allies cannot ignore North Korea, even if its only reward is to be vilified. Its overall strategy is said to be one of cautious, gradual escalation, with each step reversible if the risks are too high. By staging ambiguous provocations in peripheral parts of the demilitarized zone, the north can probe whether and how the south intends to retaliate. If the south does reply in kind, then the north can back down. Or, if it judges the time to be ripe, it can escalate the attack.

Deterrence and Compellence—Waiting Game Version

In this theory, provocations are characterized not as irrational tantrums, but as rational acts intended to pave the way for subsequent attack. As North Korea has no intention of attacking without warning, general deterrence is therefore not obtained by nuclear threats (nor has it failed). Nuclear threats, however, can obtain immediate deterrence by promptly

targeting further escalations of a provocative act. Compellence can be achieved also by forcing North Korea to desist from the activity that led to the confrontation.

Alternately, the waiting game theory treats provocations as rational acts, but not in the pursuit of an attack on South Korea. North Korea, for example, may seek to undermine public support for the U.S. commitment to South Korea by reminding Americans of the dangers of war in Korea. Its 1981 missile attack on a U.S. SR-71 spyplane may have been an attempt to dramatize these risks.¹⁸ In such transient events, neither immediate deterrence nor immediate compellence can be obtained. In more prolonged confrontations, however, the waiting game theory suggests that nuclear threats provide major leverage over Pyongyang. The *Pueblo*, EC-121, and August 1976 crises are often cited in this respect.

Siege Mentality

The first two theories work like a hall of mirrors. The strategic concepts that underpin them are a closed system of interdependent beliefs that exclude alternative explanations of the North Korean reaction to nuclear threats. An anomaly in the blitz theory becomes a confirmation in the waiting game theory. When the inconsistency of one theory is pointed out, adherents simply evade the problem by flipping to the other formulation—and then back again.

Stepping out of the hall of mirrors affords a substantially different—and unsettling—perspective. North Korea's military posture is consistent with another theory altogether: North Korea has built an offensive deterrent to defend North Korea against a perceived external threat. According to this concept, North Korea does not intend to attack, either directly or indirectly, but itself fears an invasion. It intends to counter such an attack by either a direct or an indirect preemptive or retaliatory attack. In short, it is gripped by a siege mentality.

An offensive deterrent, whether it threatens to preempt an anticipated attack or to retaliate after an external attack, is a defensive military strategy, one often employed by states that perceive themselves to be threatened by overwhelmingly superior force.¹⁹

The siege theory suggests that *defensive* considerations may underlie North Korea's force structure—even if offensive forces were carried over from an earlier, more confrontational era. While it differs from the waiting game theory with respect to North Korean intention, the interpretation of the force posture and strategy is quite similar.

In this conception, North Korea's strategy reflects its perception that it is trapped in a strategic dilemma. Even if North Korean leaders still

want to eliminate South Korea as currently constituted, they recognize that this goal cannot be achieved militarily. Far from pursuing a coherent policy of military domination of South Korea, it is they who feel threatened. "There is no threat of a southward invasion," Kim Il Sung proclaimed in June 1977, ten months after the brush with war the preceding year. "Rather it is we who are being threatened by invasion."²⁰

In the siege theory, any residual North Korean intention of attacking South Korea is held to be already deterred by U.S. and South Korean conventional forces. Once someone is deterred, then no additional general deterrence can be obtained from nuclear threats.

Instead of being deterred, North Korea may experience U.S. nuclear threats as coercion, felt continuously between crises, and acutely during crises when the United States applies additional pressure in search of immediate compellence.

Encirclement Phobia, Paranoia

This theory holds that North Korea suffers what military analyst Young Koo Cha calls "encirclement phobia." The north's offensive deterrent counters the conventional threat. To hedge and/or defend against surprise U.S. and/or South Korean attack, North Korea would absorb southern momentum with sheer military mass.²¹ In this vein, a 1975 U.S. Army report stated, "There appears to be a degree of paranoia among North Korean military leaders concerning a possible Inchon type attack."²² With a relatively weak and geographically divided fleet, North Korea could not interdict amphibious attacks should the United States decide to unleash the marines.²³

The siege theory accounts not only for the north's forward-deployed offensive force posture, but also for aspects of the posture that are inexplicable in the blitz and waiting game theories. Of particular interest are what might be called North Korea's "surplus" tanks and artillery. Crude calculations show that the north has twice as many artillery pieces and three times as many tanks as it could bring to bear in the constrictive terrain of the invasion corridors across the demilitarized zone.²⁴

When combined with the paramilitary forces trained for prolonged guerrilla warfare deep inside North Korea—a defensive force that cannot be employed offensively—then the "surplus" armor could be employed to counter strikes by South Korean or U.S. forces from the air, sea, or land.²⁵

Like the blitz scenario, the siege theory also discounts as suicidal the idea that North Korea would venture on a protracted indirect offensive against South Korea and the United States. Both of North Korea's adversaries are far more capable than the north of mobilizing resources for a war of attrition.²⁶

The siege mentality theory is most persuasive, however, when one considers the limited strategic options open to North Korea for responding to U.S. nuclear threats. North Koreans do not only have to deter the conventional threats from the southern allies outlined in chapters four and five; they also have to counter nuclear threats. As was shown earlier, North Korea has invested substantial resources in preparing militarily for nuclear attack. Passive defenses combined with an offensive deterrent is a rational strategy for meeting a massive nuclear threat.

Blitz theorists argue that a massive, immediately deliverable nuclear threat should be ever present and that nuclear deterrence operates continuously. Similarly, a nonnuclear state can adopt a credible countervailing strategy against the threat of nuclear attack by threatening continuously to deliver a massive blow of its own.²⁷

Chapter 12 suggests that it would be logical for North Koreans to consider U.S. nuclear attack in the battle zone around the demilitarized zone to be more likely than a decisive rear attack. Their forward deployment may be intended to forestall such an attack in wartime by mixing friend with foe and civilian, a tactic called “hugging the enemy.” The North Koreans may think that this tactic would render U.S. nuclear escalation politically and morally difficult—if not impossible. A 1976 report to the U.S. Defense Nuclear Agency spelled out how a conventional breakthrough offensive operation could defeat the threat of nuclear attack:

Regardless of the care with which offensive and defensive plans may have been prepared, there is great confusion among the opposing forces shortly after a major penetration attack is initiated, and this confusion increases—particularly in the defending forces—as the attack proceeds and gains momentum. The more rapid the movement of the attacker, the less opportunity either side will have to acquire targets of opportunity which will remain in place long enough and which will be substantial enough to warrant firing a nuclear weapon.²⁸

If the north has built an offensive deterrent, then U.S. nuclear threats may be highly counterproductive. These threats may generate paranoid responses from North Korea, pollute the political climate, and increase the risk that in a crisis North Korea will attack in order to defend—or that South Korea will preempt North Korea’s offensive deterrent.

Indeed, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency states that nuclear attack may not deter North Korean attack: “An enemy nuclear attack is not considered sufficient reason for the NKA [North Korean Army] to interrupt its combat operations.” Even worse, nuclear attack may induce North Korean forces to *accelerate* their attack. As the agency reveals:

They are instructed to advance and close rapidly, since enemy-occupied

territory is more vulnerable under this condition . . . If a frontline unit is rendered incapable of continued action, units in reserve take over the mission and continue the attack.²⁹

Far from freezing the security deadlock, therefore, nuclear threats may destabilize the standoff and make the security dilemma worse.

Nuclear Compellence and Deterrence—Siege Mentality

In the siege mentality theory, North Korean provocations can be explained as nonrational or rational actions.

As nonrational actions, provocations may result from North Korean loss of control over their field forces. The 1969 EC-121 shootdown was arguably such an event. Loss of control cannot be prevented by general nuclear deterrence. Indeed, by heightening extant tension, general nuclear deterrence threats may increase the likelihood of losses of control. Subsequent U.S. threats for immediate deterrence or compellence may compound the original loss of control.

Alternately, provocations may be the result of rational calculations in Pyongyang, which is not assumed to be a unitary actor. A variety of rational strategies are possible.

First, one faction may be trying to outmaneuver another by provoking a crisis with the United States which disadvantages its domestic opponent. A hard-line faction, for example, may launch an attack to block another faction desirous of entering into negotiations with the United States and South Korea from using the good offices of Beijing or Moscow. The 1987 KAL bombing incident may have been just such an event.

In this case, general deterrence threats arguably *invite* the provocations, while further threats by the United States for compellence simply serve the goals of the risk-taking “provocative” faction that exploits nuclear threats to its own ends.

Second, provocations against the United States may be intended to send messages to third parties, as Pyongyang’s attempt to embarrass its allies against accommodating North Korea’s enemies. The *Pueblo* incident, for example, took place when the Soviet Union and China were starting to talk with the United States, a threatening development to Pyongyang.

Third, provocations aimed at the United States may be intended to remind the United States of the dangers of war in Korea. The August 1976 confrontation could be explicable as a warning signal if the North Koreans did not simply lose control of their guards at Panmunjom.

The last chapter noted the curious silence from Pyongyang on the disproportionate American response to the August incident. If Pyongyang really was frightened of war—and its admission of regret is circumstantial

evidence that it took the risk very seriously—then its tight-lipped rhetorical response makes sense. To have done otherwise would have given the United States further incentive to exploit Pyongyang's nuclear vulnerability.

The siege theory suggests that North Korea's antinuclear rhetoric is modulated. Unlike the blitz theory, which simply dismisses all North Korean rhetoric, it implies that North Korea may punctuate periods of relative calm with confrontations that exploit the possibility of nuclear war by dramatizing the risks of confrontation to South Korean and U.S. publics. At times of high immediate threat, it will concentrate its focus on other themes to divert American attention from the utility of nuclear threats. And during grave crises, it will invoke Soviet and Chinese extended deterrence and cry wolf as loudly as possible.

In short, North Korean provocations may be read as danger signals, whether flashed at allies or enemies. The siege theory, therefore, argues that provocations cannot be halted by general or immediate nuclear threats. Indeed, the intentions underlying the provocations may be immune to nuclear threats. In this respect, the siege theory gives conclusions similar to those of the blitz theory.

But unlike the blitz or the waiting game theories, the siege theory suggests that there is no reason to expect any particular outcome from threats aimed at compelling North Korea during crises. Immediate compellence may be achieved, as it arguably was in the August 1976 crisis, but it may not (as in the 1968 *Pueblo* and 1969 EC-121 crises) or the record may be uncertain (as in the impact of nuclear threats on the 1953 armistice negotiations).

Conversely, the siege theory predicts that nuclear threats will affect the North Korean force posture—an impact that the blitz and waiting game theories simply deny or ignore. If nuclear threats backed by war-fighting forces, doctrine, exercises, and rhetoric in Korea have motivated North Korea to adopt an offensive force posture, then U.S. nuclear threats may indeed compel North Korea—but not in ways that Americans intend. In short, U.S. nuclear threats are like unguided missiles fired continuously into uncharted but inhabited territory. Upon landing, the threats explode in North Korean minds with unpredictable and unanticipated effects.

Conclusion

The three theories give radically different interpretations of the impact of nuclear threats on North Korea.

In summary, the blitz theory suggests that general and immediate nuclear deterrence operate all the time against pending North Korean

attack on South Korea, but that during crises only immediate compellence (and not immediate deterrence) are at work.

The waiting game theory suggests that general nuclear deterrence is nonexistent, but general conventional deterrence operates continuously, while immediate nuclear compellence and deterrence operate only during crises.

The siege theory suggests that general and immediate nuclear deterrence are nonexistent. Nuclear threats may compel North Korea to comply with U.S. wishes. But they may also invite attack for rational reasons unrelated to U.S. deterrence goals. And they may result in an unanticipated, unremarked military response by North Korea that, being unintended, might be called "blind compellence."

These theories are not exclusive. It seems unlikely that a line struggle-induced provocation against U.S. forces also would be a rational probe of U.S. resolve. For the former assumes a faction-ridden, divided North Korean state, while the latter posits a unitary North Korean state. But it is entirely conceivable that the siege mentality impels North Korea to launch "crazy" provocations that stir agitation in the American public while simultaneously testing U.S. resolve as part of the north's waiting game strategy.

Each theory also implies that ground-based nuclear weapons in Korea have impacts on the north different from nuclear forces that are kept outside Korea but are focused on the north during crises.

In the siege theory, the army's doctrine that proposes using nuclear weapons to compel the North does not deter the north from attacking. Rather, it provokes paranoia in the north that stimulates potential for inadvertent escalation (through loss of control) or leads the North Koreans to construct a threatening offensive deterrent and to conduct provocations designed to keep the United States at a distance. In short, nuclear threats feed off themselves by evoking reactions in the north that fuel southern fear of northern intentions. Whether the nuclear weapons are inside or outside Korea makes little difference in their counterproductive impact on conventional deterrence in Korea.

In the waiting game theory, North Korea has no immediate intention of attacking. Consequently, "routine" threats from nuclear weapons stationed in Korea do not generally deter North Korea. Moreover, when confrontations do erupt, the United States usually uses nuclear forces kept outside Korea to coerce North Korea. The waiting game theory suggests that tactical warfighting weapons are not needed in Korea for general or immediate deterrence or compellence.

Only the blitz theory suggests that the army's warfighting weapons enter the general deterrence equation due to the inadequacy of conventional deterrence. The case for warfighting weapons in Korea therefore

rests with the blitz theory. But as noted already, the assumption that North Korea intends to launch a blitz without notice is dubious at best. The credibility of the blitz theory—and the utility of warfighting nuclear weapons in Korea—turns on the strength of conventional deterrence. Is conventional deterrence so weak that it requires nuclear reinforcing rods?

Sitzkrieg

The CIA reassessment increased North Korea's strength and shortened the warning time with a new bean-count. We had the smoking gun we needed.

—Former State Department official,
December 22, 1987

The demilitarized zone is choreographed for war. As one drives from Seoul to Panmunjom, huge arches of concrete over the highway signal that Korea is still at war. Each one is from 9 to 12 meters wide and 9 meters high of solid concrete ready to be blown onto the road to block tanks moving south.

U.S. combat troops, fully armed, with faces painted black and green, regularly pile out of their trucks and set off into the unkempt, thick forest in the demilitarized zone. These troops—the only U.S. forces on continuous wartime footing—search for signs of North Korean infiltration south of the military demarcation line at the center of the 4-kilometer-wide demilitarized zone.

At Panmunjom is the building housing meetings of the military representatives to the Military Armistice Commission. The North Korean spokesperson is flanked by a Chinese delegate. The American is accompanied by a South Korean deputy.

Inside, the representatives sit at a table covered with green velvet. The line running down the center of the table is the military demarcation line. All interaction between the two sides is ritual. The demilitarized zone is a stage set orchestrated to gain political advantage over the other side.

Some years ago, for example, each party side strove to have the most ornate flagpole on the table. Eventually, the flagpoles reached the ceiling and so obstructed the meetings that a special meeting of Military Armistice Commission had to address the “flag problem.”

The North Koreans accepted a truce in the battle of the flagpoles which awarded them a pole that is about half an inch taller than that of the UN Command. For its part, the UN Command got a knob on the top of its pole that is slightly wider than that of the north. The base to the North Korean pole has three steps, while that of UN Command has only two—but its base is slightly bigger.

The flag race inside the MAC building was a sideshow compared to the giant Eiffel towers that both sides have erected outside. A 30-meter-high flag flies from the steel spire in the middle of South Korea's "Freedom Village" only a few hundred yards from the demarcation line. Another enormous flag flaps from what the guide calls "Propaganda Village," north of the line.

Images are more important than reality in the demilitarized zone. It makes no military sense to have civilians living in the zone, or for most of South Korea's artillery to be located no more than 6 kilometers south, within easy reach of North Korean artillery.¹

The only language that both sides speak and understand here is that of violence, or the threat of violence. What Panmunjon is about is *not* communicating, *not* sharing information, *not* finding common ground. The military cannot fight in Korea. But if the big guns must stay silent, the loudspeakers must not. Ever since the war stopped, a sitzkrieg has replaced the blitzkriegs that once swirled around these mountains. The staged ritual combat is an extraordinary anachronism that exemplifies the irrationality of the arms race in Korea.

This chapter examines the conventional side of that race. It compares the forces and weapons of both sides. It appraises—and discounts—the ability of North Korea to conduct a blitz or a gradually escalating conventional attack on South Korea. It shows that the north cannot assemble the combined ground, naval, and air forces that it would need to smash through South Korea's defenses. It concludes that nuclear weapons in Korea contribute nothing to what is an already robust conventional deterrent and defense on the southern side. In fact, the "net balance" of will and conventional capability may favor the south rather than north.

Bean Counting

In principle, there are three methods for determining the military "balance." These are bean counting, sword-on-shield, and scenario-driven comparisons.

In a static comparison of weapon systems, numerical superiority represents military advantage. Thus North Korea is said to enjoy military superiority whenever the ratio of forces in table 10-1 is greater than 1—that is, in virtually all cases. In reality, this method hides more than it reveals as performance on the modern battlefield is determined more by relative capabilities of countervailing weapons, terrain, training, readiness, surprise, and other intangibles such as leadership and morale.

A sword-on-shield approach avoids the gross error of portraying a military "balance" by numerical ratios. It compares the ability of one

Table 10-1
North and South Korean Military Forces, 1987

Type	North (N)	South (S)	N/S
Army	750,000	542,000	1.4
Army reserves	500,000	1,400,000 (Regular) }	1.2
	5,000,000 Reserve/ Militia	3,300,000 (Reserve Defense Force) }	
Tanks	2,900	1,300	2.2
Artillery	6,000	3,300	1.8
Rocket launchers	1,800	176	10.2
SsMs	69	12	5.6
Air defense guns	8,000	600	13.3
Navy	35,000	29,000 (including Marines)	1.2
Navy reserves	40,000	25,000	1.6
Marines ^a	—	—	—
Marine reserves	—	60,000	—
Air Force	53,000	33,000	1.6
Reserves	—	55,000	—
Combat aircraft	850	476	1.8
Paramilitary			
Civilian	3,000,000	3,500,000	0.9
Red Youth	700,000	600,000 (Student) }	
Security forces	38,000	—	
Total, active	838,000	629,000	

Sources: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1987-1988* (London: ISIS, 1987), pp. 162-65; J. Bermudez, "North Korean Marines," *Asian-Pacific Defense Forum* 12:3 (Winter 1987-88), p. 29.

Note: Estimates for North Korea are controversial. There are no foreign military forces in North Korea. U.S. and KCIA forces are not shown. North Korea claims to have demobilized 150,000 forces in 1986-87.

^aSaid to be 112,000 of the NKPA strength, but not listed separately; and 20,000 of ROK Navy personnel.

weapon system—for example, tanks—to defeat weapons designed to counter it—such as antitank missiles and artillery. Like the numerical comparison, however, sword-on-shield ratios do not illuminate the dynamic aspects of fighting.

Only war-gaming techniques purport to simulate accurately the actual battlefield dynamics. The war-gaming method relies on conflict scenarios specified down to details such as weather, surprise, and friendly and adversarial tactics. Being scenario-driven, however, it tends toward self-fulfilling prophecy. All too often, it tests existing war plans that contain optimistic, ethnocentric, or standard performance indices that may bear little relation to actual operating abilities under the fog and fire of war.²

Rhetoric and Reality

Military analysts pronounce Kim Il Sung to be a crazy dog who may attack at the drop of a hat. At the same time, they announce loudly in Washington that they are defenseless before his forces and need a bigger stick to beat the crazy dog back into its corner. Plainly, advertising one's vulnerability would be imprudent if they really believed that Kim Il Sung is poised to attack and crazy. This gap between rhetoric and reality suggests that public and private beliefs may diverge.

A secret Rand report filed in 1972, for example, argued that *without U.S. support*, the South Korean Army would not be able to hold Seoul against a *combined* North Korean–Chinese attack for long enough to permit U.S. forces to return to Korea. Under the best conditions for the defense (that is, assuming perfect information and decisions by the defense) they calculated that Seoul would have fallen within about three weeks. But they concluded that if the South Korean Army were upgraded either by adding more divisions and ready reserves or by modernizing the existing forces, then the south's defenses would become tenable without U.S. support, *against even combined attack*.³

For all the talk of north Korean superiority in the 1970s, the U.S. Department of Defense had no agreed method for determining the relative "balance" or "imbalance" of military force, the so-called net assessment. "In fact," concluded a consultant reporting to the U.S. Army in March 1977, "there is no agreed method of measuring the balance, and even less agreement about how a given estimate of the balance can be translated into corrective measures to give Allied forces [in Korea] a capability to defend or deter.

"This makes any effort to assess Korean vulnerabilities difficult and uncertain," he added. "It also makes it important to qualify any attempt to carry out such analysis with a suitable statement of the limitations of the approach."

He warned further that even if accurate information on the military forces could be obtained—no simple matter in the case of either Korea—the Pentagon probably couldn't use the results in an objective fashion. Comparing force ratios, he cautioned, can be useful to show overall trends and may broadly indicate capability for sustained war making. "The DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency] summary force comparisons prepared for PRM 13 [the "Yes sir!" PRM described in chapter 5] are valid and useful to the extent they accomplish this," he said, "although they fail to cover a wide enough range of categories, do not take relative equipment quality into account, and do not qualify the importance of given ratios under Korean operational conditions." But this approach avoids the main methodological problem:

The main issue in assessing vulnerabilities, however, is not total force trends, but how the ROK would perform in critical scenarios or contingencies. The ROK faces special tactical and strategic problems which limit the value of total force comparisons regardless of how they are made . . . Unfortunately "contingency" [scenario-driven] analysis is highly problematic. Relatively small variations in assumptions about warning or deployment factors can produce major changes in the postulated force ratios available to each side in a given contingency, or in the inputs to a war game.⁴

"This preface," he noted, "is a sophisticated way of saying that it is not currently possible to make judgments about the ROK-NKA [Republic of Korea–North Korean Army] balance with a useful degree of precision, and that the decision maker may be better off using his own judgments than the result of any given analysis."⁵

They did just that. In 1980 officials in the Carter administration admitted that they still had no specific definition of what counted as an "adequate" military balance in Korea.⁶ In public, however, they did not hesitate to assert that the north had achieved unambiguous offensive superiority over South Korea.

Forward Deployment

Whatever North Korea's true intentions, there is no doubt that its forces are enormous and contain many offensive capabilities, including mobile armor and artillery, and 80,000–100,000 commandos.

These forces are largely forward deployed along the demilitarized zone. Forward deployment of supply forces and stockpiles is regarded as particularly suspicious.

This forward deployment is estimated at "70 percent," although forward of where and percent of what is never defined in public. It should be noted that U.S. and South Korean forces have been farther forward deployed than North Korean forces until the late 1970s, a trend that continues. In October 1985, for example, the U.S. Nineteenth Support Command relocated rear-based ammunition to forward sites to increase the stocks on hand during a war—just like the north.⁷

In fact, two North Korean weaknesses appear to have induced North Korea to move stockpiled supplies to the demilitarized zone. First, they face an estimated 30 percent shortfall in the labor required to sustain a war economy, making a short war strategy strategically necessary even if undesirable from a defensive viewpoint.⁸ Second, their supply lines are highly vulnerable to southern interdiction from the air.

In 1983 the North Koreans reportedly moved forward strike forces formerly based north of Pyongyang and Wonsan.⁹ This movement forward occurred at the high point of superpower hostility in the second cold war. All in that year, the Soviets shot down KAL 007, the United States invaded Grenada and explicitly introduced Airland Battle doctrine to Korea, and the North Koreans reportedly bombed President Chun's cabinet in Rangoon.

The events likely motivated the North Koreans to swing definitively to the Soviet Union, thereby contravening the long-standing principle of North Korean neutrality in the Sino-Soviet conflict. At the same time, the North Koreans redeployed and reorganized their military forces. Far from fulfilling its continuing political ambitions by forcefully reunifying Korea, North Korea perceives itself to be preparing to fight from a position of defensive inferiority against a massive combined force led by an erratic superpower that has already used nuclear weapons in Asia. Instead of reflecting North Korean military strength, this forward deployment, combined with terrorist tactics, represents a virtual admission of North Korea's military weakness and sheer desperation.

But if the north's forces were defensively motivated, argue U.S. strategists, then such a logistical disposition would be too vulnerable to southern attack. U.S. and South Korean strategists worry about the forward deployment because it leaves the south with less than two days and possibly as little as a few hours of warning of imminent northern attack—or so it is said.¹⁰

But is such an attack plausible? Does North Korea enjoy the superior military capability required to sustain either a direct or indirect attack and expect to win?

North versus South Military Capabilities

Assume for a moment a worst case sketched for the author by a former U.S. commander in chief in Korea.¹¹ Kim Il Sung, or his successor, dreams of invading the south and at last observes it to be gripped by a domestic political crisis. Add the news that the South Korean military is split over how to handle the situation. Assume further that Kim Il Sung claims that apparently legitimate political forces in South Korea have called for northern support, giving the north the political rationale it needs to invade.

U.S. intelligence officials say that this scenario is politically myopic as it would allow the South Korean military to discredit its opposition politically and to unify the country to fight the north.¹² But assume, for the purposes of argument, that Pyongyang was willing to ignore this reality and launched a frontal attack. What could happen?

Ground Forces

The first thing that the north would discover is that the bulk of its armor, the 2,600 tanks it has acquired or built, are unsuited for fighting on the terrain north of Seoul.¹³ As military analyst John Simpson wrote in 1980, "The North is apparently concentrating heavily on a gargantuan tank force, yet the South Korean terrain as a rule is remarkably unsuited for tank warfare!"¹⁴

Simple bean counting that shows that North Korea has more tanks or artillery throws no light on the likely outcome of a war. It does not reveal how many of these weapons the north can bring to bear on the narrow invasion corridors. Nor does it reveal how those that they can muster would stand up to the hail of antitank and antipersonnel weapons fired from the air and well-prepared fortified sites in the invasion corridors north of Seoul. Finally, the essence of armored warfare tactics is to use the mobility of tanks to avoid meeting defensive forces head-on.¹⁵ The mountainous valleys that run from the demilitarized zone to Seoul preclude this strategy. Massed formations of tanks would be canalized into predictable lines of advance down valleys in which they would be subject to withering fire—so much so that one corridor is known as the "Bowling Alley."

North Korean doctrine calls for the following offensive/defensive force ratios for successful attack: 3–5:1 in armor; 6–8:1 in artillery; 4–6:1 in infantry.¹⁶ The overall north-south ratios as of 1984 were: 2.5:1 in armor; 1.5 in artillery; 1.1:1 in personnel.¹⁷ It is simply unknown in the public domain whether the North Koreans can generate local force ratios along the invasion corridors that would satisfy their doctrine.

Gridiron Defense

In the early 1970s, the U.S.–South Korean forces adopted a forward-defense strategy that emphasized holding the line at the demilitarized zone rather than falling back to prepared lines of defense that traded space for time. To put muscle behind the new strategy, the artillery ammunition held in store was doubled, and advanced munitions were introduced. The antitank obstacles mentioned earlier were also constructed.

The new strategy pitted U.S. technology and firepower against North Korean numbers. It drew on modern military technology that increasingly favors the defense. The offensive ratios needed in North Korean doctrine for successful attack do not reflect this technological ingredient of a gridiron defense.

In 1984, for example, the Second Infantry Division introduced Copperhead laser-guided artillery projectiles as part of a three-day combined

arms live-fire exercise—the first time the weapons had been fired outside the U.S. mainland. All rounds scored direct hits. Designed to destroy tanks, self-propelled artillery, air-defense vehicles, and other point targets; it homes in during dry, clear weather on the energy reflected from a laser-designated target over three 16,000-meter ranges to deliver a lethal 49-pound shaped charge warhead.¹⁸

In 1978 U.S. analysts noted that if North Korea spaced tanks 250 yards apart all along a 15-mile western invasion front, they could bring only one thousand tanks to bear—a figure that could be matched numerically by South Korean tanks. The total southern tank, missile, and air-borne antitank capability could conceivably destroy three North Korean tanks for every southern tank lost, enough to maintain a 1:1 ratio, well below the north Korean norm of a threefold advantage necessary to achieve breakthrough.¹⁹ North Koreans, it should be noted, may be asking the same questions about South Korean and U.S. offensive armored capabilities.

South Korea and the United States also see exploitable weaknesses in a frontal North Korean attack that combined regular and special (including commando) forces. Northern tactics would leave its troops dispersed and unable to concentrate for breakthrough. Northern doctrine calls for units to annihilate every unit they encounter, a tactic that would divert them from more important tasks and leave them vulnerable to counterattack.

Deformed Defenses

On the other hand, the current U.S.—South Korean defensive strategy has been described as brittle. It assumes that North Koreans would allow themselves to be concentrated by the rigid positional defenses so that artillery and close-air-support could attrite them with sheer firepower. In reality, southern airpower may be diverted from the close air-support role by the task of first obtaining the requisite air superiority over the battlefield, by which time air support may be too little, too late. Moreover, an artillery-based defense is fragile, being vulnerable to suppression by North Korean artillery and envelopment and disruption by North Korean light infantry and special forces which would infiltrate to ambush and attack artillery sites.²⁰

Having been created, organized, trained, financed, armed, and commanded by the U.S. military, the South Korean military has procured similar weapons and adheres to similar military doctrines. Its infantry is trained to fight from one prepared position. The defenses are meant to induce the North Koreans to concentrate where they would be decimated by artillery firepower and air attacks.²¹

It is unlikely, however, that the North Koreans are stupid enough to

be trapped so easily. Although they cannot hope to blast their way down the invasion corridors, they could launch a diversionary attack across the eastern demilitarized zone. If successful, the south would have to divert forces from the defenses away from Seoul, opening the way for North Korean infantry and special forces to soften up the positional defenses until North Korean armor could enter the battle.²²

If correct, this analysis suggests that the strategy adopted to defend Seoul has deformed the South Korean force posture. It is one that is ill suited to holding the line north of Seoul *and* it suits the strengths of the North Korean military—that is, fluid maneuver tactics of infantry warfare designed to circumvent the power of artillery and strong points.²³

It was precisely these weaknesses that importing Airland Battle doctrine to Korea was supposed to overcome. To that end, South Korea has procured long-range artillery, antitank missiles, and new aircraft. Yet it appears that South Korea has no more assurance of launching Airland Battle style—counteroffensives than it does of merely holding the line north of Seoul.

Airpower

North Korea's military weaknesses are not limited to the ground. North Korea also lacks an air force capable of sustained offensive operations in South Korea. The North Korean Air Force is composed mostly of MiG-15, MiG-17, and MiG-19 planes of 1950s or 1960s vintage, supplemented recently by 40 or 50 MiG-23s. Their 150 MiG 21s of 1960s vintage are the same planes that were outperformed by U.S. F-4s in Vietnam. The northern planes drop only unguided iron bombs and sport less sophisticated antiair missiles. They face the F-4, an all-weather fighter flown by well-trained South Koreans, and F-5 E/Fs, which can vastly outperform the MiG-23s obtained by the north in 1984. The southern planes, especially the new F-16s, also carry a plethora of guided missiles and smart bombs and are expert in close support of ground forces.²⁴

According to the U.S. Army, the North Korean air force has

no long-range capabilities; limited all-weather intercept capabilities; limited ordnance delivery systems; major aircraft repair parts must come from outside sources; majority of combat aircraft are over 25 years old; does *not* provide close air support to ground troops in contact.²⁵

Command and Control

The North Korean command and field leadership would also be confused by the combination of poor tactics, supply limitations, and its inability to conduct protracted conventional war.²⁶ The U.S. military would put a

high priority on disrupting the northern command and control system. Intelligence agencies believe that system already to be cumbersome and unresponsive.²⁷ The U.S. military plans to disable North Korea's command and control systems at the outset of a war. The military also intends to wound as many troops as possible with antipersonnel weapons to maximize the stress on what remains of the command system, on the theory that, as a former U.S. commander of ground forces in Korea put it, "leaderless troops are more of a burden than dead ones and wounded soldiers are the greatest burden of all."²⁸

Utility of Nuclear Weapons

Defense against armored and light infantry invasion can be achieved without resort to nuclear weapons. Indeed, limited use of nuclear weapons could force North Korean troops and armor to disperse, making conventional defense even harder. As military analyst Brian Jack put it a decade ago,

With specialized assets for killing high value targets such as tanks, the ROK air force, using conventional weapons, can fare well without having to resort to nuclear weapons. A squadron of general-purpose attack aircraft such as F-4 or F-5, armed with laser-guided bombs or special-purpose tank-killers such as the A-10 could, in a day's work, match the tank-killing potential of a single nuclear weapon if all the targets were in a confined area. It would be superior to the nuclear weapon if the targets were distributed in an area larger than the effective area of the nuclear weapon.²⁹

Using nuclear weapons to defeat the North Korean Air Force, however, would seem to be totally unnecessary. Gen. Jerome Malley, then commander of Pacific Air Forces, summed up the American attitude toward northern airpower in 1984: "If they stay unflushed, they won't be of very much use [to him]. So they've got to flush, and we may be able to do some things to flush them. There are certain targets they have to defend, and if they flush—that's our goal—we'll take them out in their air."³⁰

Attacking North Korean forces with nuclear weapons on the battlefield around the demilitarized zone, especially the nuclear artillery, would potentially disrupt the southern defenses and create a severe danger of radioactive fallout. As one senior U.S. commander said,

In Korea, nuclear weapons are not surgical instruments regardless of how small they are. Where do you suckers think you are going to shoot those things? The Koreans are not dumb. They have to say: you look at the terrain, unless you preempt, which we're reluctant to do, and you target

troops, they're all going to be in South Korea. You are blowing up what you are trying to save.³¹

Moreover, using nuclear weapons in and around heavily populated areas could kill more South Koreans than northerners. "If you used one of those things," said a retired nuclear engineer formerly stationed in Korea, "there would be so many refugees and people on the road and even troops on the road bogged down that you'd kill more of your own than anything else."

In short, nuclear weapons are both counterproductive and unnecessary. As Gen. John Cushman, former commander of the CFC's Ground Forces Component in Korea wrote in 1984,

Although it was not always so, it has in recent years become possible to present to the North Korean decision makers a more than adequate deterrent to any idea they may have about attacking the South, without repeated reference to the nuclear component of that deterrent in the hands of the United States . . . [Even] with so unpredictable a political chief to the North as Kim Il Sung, the ROK/US ability to safeguard the territorial integrity of the South and to punish severely an attacker is assured without the nuclear weapons.³²

Deterrence: Conventional versus Nuclear

With North Korea facing severe gaps in its relative military capabilities, the right question is not "Is conventional deterrence adequate in South Korea?" but rather "Has South Korea accumulated military capability which is far superior to that of North Korea?"

Even conservative analysts believe that the crossover point between southern defensive parity and southern superiority over North Korea is not far in the future. If South Korea tips the balance, writes Rand analyst Charles Wolf, "such a move could be provocative and, for example, might trigger stepped-up support for the North by the Soviet Union to provide a countervailing expansion of North Korean forces."³³

To North Korea's military difficulties would be added the possible refusal of the Soviet Union and China to support a North Korean invasion. As Donald Zagoria has written, "The Soviets have made it abundantly clear that they do not support a high-risk strategy for reunifying Korea."³⁴ In 1980 China also stated that it will not support the forceful reunification of Korea.³⁵

Since 1983 the Soviets have been closer to the north than they had been for many years. However, the MiG 29 aircraft provided by the

Soviets have not been tested or flown at their maximum capacity by North Korean pilots, nor have these pilots practiced using them for close air support of ground forces. Moreover, according to U.S. Deputy Pacific Commander Gen. Michael Cairns, North Korean–Soviet naval exercises have been perfunctory, without attempting any coordination between the two navies.³⁶

In contrast to North Korea's unreliable allies is the U.S. commitment to South Korea. U.S. troops have remained in Korea continuously since the end of the Korean War in 1953. Overall, there are about 43,000 American troops in Korea, concentrated in the central and northwestern portion of the demilitarized zone but operating from forty bases scattered across the south. Admittedly, they represent only a small fraction (an estimated 3 percent, in the view of the South Korean military) of South Korea's defensive, nonnuclear capability.³⁷ Although war plans call for more than 400,000 troops to rush from the United States, domestic politics would probably block such a U.S. mobilization.³⁸

Some Koreans consider that this latter factor enhances the credibility of nuclear escalation. They believe that, having no other option, the United States would be forced to resort to nuclear weapons. But as a Pentagon report put it in 1972, "The political costs of using such weapons [in Korea] even in the event of a massive attack would be enormous."³⁹

If, as South Koreans often argue, the United States is unwilling to fight a protracted conventional war in Korea for fear of the political fallout, how much more unlikely is it to be willing to incur the political costs of using nuclear weapons? In any case, with or without U.S. ground troops or nuclear weapons in Korea, the United States can devastate North Korea with the bombers from Strategic Air Command from Guam and from Seventh Fleet carriers or cruise missile–armed warships from the outset.

Vulnerability to Guerrilla Attack

If the North Koreans unleashed their guerrilla forces in an indirect attack rather than an all-out conventional attack, U.S. forces would not be relevant. U.S. special forces in Korea are minimal, and few in the Army Special Forces unit in Okinawa speak Korean. The North Koreans, however, could not be confident that such an attack would succeed.

First, it is evident to anyone who travels in South Korea that the population is not champing at the bit to join the North Korean "socialist paradise." Second, the South Korean military have been quick to publicize their effectiveness in tracking down and eliminating suspected and actual North Korean infiltrators. The inability of alleged infiltrators to affect events in the turbulence in the first half of 1980 or in the spring of 1987

shows that the North Koreans cannot expect much gain from this strategy.⁴⁰ South Korean Special Forces would be even more efficient and ruthless in wartime in rounding up North Korean suspects.

Third, if discovered, the guerrillas would provide the South Korean military with precisely the excuse needed to unify the population around anti-Communist themes. North Korea's military means would thus defeat its political end, no matter what havoc would be wreaked by guerrilla operations.

The "balance" looks much less disadvantageous to South Korea than is portrayed by the military.⁴¹ Overall, therefore, the conclusion of a Pentagon report in 1972 remains valid: "ROK forces alone can now . . . hold off an attack by North Korea alone without US ground combat involvement and without the use of nuclear weapons."⁴²

Balance of Legitimacy

Nonetheless, no one can define the "real" balance as no one has ever fought a war with the firepower that would be unleashed in such a confined space as in Korea. Intangible factors such as morale and social organization also affect such calculations. It is often said, for example, that South Korea's "authoritarian" social system is more susceptible to domestic turmoil and disunity than North Korea's "totalitarian" system, where dissent is impossible.

There is little doubt that the North Korean state probably enjoys more legitimacy than its southern counterpart, in part manufactured by the propaganda machine surrounding the Kim cult, and also because of the equitable delivery of social and economic welfare to the population. But North Korea also has its social and political problems. In the mid-1970s, upward of 21 percent of the population was estimated to be politically unreliable due to southern origin, collaboration with Japanese colonialists or UN forces during the war, poor ideological performance, criminal acts, or landlord/capitalist class background.⁴³

Propaganda at Panmunjon trumpets that the northern fortifications along the demilitarized zone are designed to keep northern defectors from fleeing to the south. If true, this fact shows that Kim Il Sung may not be able to rely on universal support in wartime. Ironically, U.S. commander in Korea, Gen. William Livsey, made a similar argument in scoring a propaganda point of his own in July 1984:

Let me tell you a story. Toward the end of June, some of my staff were visiting a ROK Army observation post located near the punchbowl region of the D-M-Z, just straight north of the town of Yang-gu. Enormous white clouds of smoke were rolling up from behind a ridgeline over

on the northern side. It was explained that what those clouds represented was slash and burn survival agriculture at work in North Korea. A ROK Army colonel said those clouds are a common sight. He explained that the North Korean soldiers don't have enough to eat, so they burn off these huge tracts of forest in order to have some place to plant some vegetables. In my view, any nation that can't feed the soldiers guarding its very borders is, indeed, in serious trouble.⁴⁴

Military analysts also speculate that the North Korean state is now riven by line struggles as rival factions jockey for position in the forthcoming succession to Kim Il Sung. A pro-Beijing faction led by then North Korean defense minister O-Jin U allegedly tried to assassinate Kim Il Sung in November 1986 on the train line between Kaesong and Pyongyang.⁴⁵ No doubt North Korea's leadership would pull together in wartime—as would the south's. In the meantime, it cannot be assumed that the centralized and totalitarian structures of the North Korean state are advantageous to its struggle with the south.

Another peculiar twist of logic is the argument that the smaller North Korean state spends a bigger fraction of its annual national product on the military compared with the much bigger south. Militarily, however, the north must counter not only South Korea, but the might of the Pentagon.

If U.S. expenditure is accounted for in the north-south balance, northern expenditure looks very different. In 1986, for example, the U.S. Army spent an estimated \$1.8 billion to keep its forces in Korea.⁴⁶ To this figure should be added some (say 10 percent) of the estimated \$47 billion cost of keeping the Seventh Fleet, the marines, and the air force in the West Pacific. This increment bumps the total annual cost of military support to South Korea to beyond \$6 billion—equal to the entire 1985 South Korean military budget! Total annual South Korean-U.S. military spending in Korea is therefore at least \$12 billion—by official U.S. estimates, about four times what the north spends.

The enormous war effort made by North Korean society not only mobilizes the population to support the government; it also keeps people poor—a fact that must be entering popular consciousness as more North Koreans travel and return, and more trade and investment takes place with the north. Poor people who are aware of their relative poverty often become politically disaffected. There can be little doubt that the arms race in Korea takes a heavy toll in the north as well as the south.

Should a war break out, politically alienated people on both sides would be swept up in a great struggle for survival. It is likely that they would not be a great military liability to either side. But South Korea is not more vulnerable to wartime dissent or sabotage than North Korea.

Net Assessment

Short of war, therefore, all that can be asserted confidently is that neither side could hope to launch a successful attack against the other. Both sides appear to have built a virtual second strike retaliatory military force. Neither side can attack with assurance that the other cannot expand or extend the war to the point where both sides lose all political legitimacy in the eyes of their own population.

Should conventional defenses and deterrence be as brittle as some Americans and many South Koreans believe, then a war could push the United States and South Korea to use nuclear weapons to “balance the books.” In that case, the strategy adopted to defend South Korea with conventional forces is highly laden with potential for nuclear escalation. Ironically, nuclear attack would also be relatively ineffective against the dispersed light infantry forces that North Korea would use to work its way around the fortifications that ring Seoul. Thus, the brittle strategy invites not only defeat by conventional attack, but also renders nuclear attack virtually useless.

More likely, however, conventional defenses and deterrence are robust in both directions. Nuclear weapons or U.S. involvement are superfluous to the ability of either Korea to attack the other. Whatever impulses remain for either Korea to commit aggression against the other, each side is already deterred by the other’s conventional forces.

If conventional defenses and deterrence are strong—and this appears to be the private belief of most American and many South Korean military officers—then additional deterrence cannot be gained from making nuclear threats against the north or by keeping nuclear weapons in the peninsula. Logically, there is no such thing as “additional deterrence.” If Kim Il Sung and his advisers are deterred by conventional forces, nuclear threats will not restrain him any further. The blitz theory of deterrence analyzed in the previous chapter can therefore be rejected.

It follows that conventional deterrence is unlikely to fail and there is no need to risk first use of nuclear weapons.

Admittedly, if conventional deterrence is so strong, then the United States has no reason to use nuclear weapons and the risk of escalation from renewed war in Korea is remote. But as the siege theory in chapter 9 argued, conventional deterrence may fail for reasons other than North or South Korean aggressive intentions. The tense situation on the demilitarized zone is ripe for inadvertent escalation that could arise from miscalculation, misunderstandings, and mutual deceit. In such wars, deterrence does not so much fail; it simply becomes irrelevant to the real motivations and underlying dynamics of conflict.

Part III
Nuclear Dilemmas

Warpaths

One might very well argue that this risk [of general war] is so much less in Asia that the provocation threshold at which nuclear response might be credible would be even lower in Asia than in Europe.

—Charles Wolf, Rand analyst, 1964¹

Parts I and II of this study traced the evolution of U.S. nuclear doctrine, forces, and strategy in Korea. It disclosed the military's obstinate conviction that the first lesson of the nuclear era—that wars can be fought and won with nuclear weapons—should be applied to Korea. It also showed that the second historical lesson, drawn this time from the Korean War, was adopted by the policy current committed to militant containment in Korea and beyond. In this view, nuclear weapons can be used to compel or deter an enemy or to reassure a friend or ally—but only by threatening and never by launching actual nuclear attacks.

In Korea, the second lesson never really supplanted the first. The army's preference for warfighting over diplomacy stimulated it to construct a virtual nuclear domain in Korea. Its organizational interest coincided with the fostering of an intimate nuclear collaboration with its South Korean military counterpart, which also favored warfighting doctrine and operations to threats and diplomacy. Faced with crises provoked by North Korea, American leaders have been quick to brandish the nuclear threat but slow to reflect on the poor results in terms of the impact on North Korea.

The U.S. Army in Korea has translated its warfighting nuclear strategy into a deterrence and reassurance rationale that enables it to link keeping nuclear weapons in Korea to larger U.S. interests in Japan. This regional dimension of nuclear strategy in Korea allowed the army to hook its train to the State Department when its interests in Korea were threatened by policy currents that rejected militant containment. Together with allied security elites, this coalition of interests thrust aside opposing policy currents.

The inexorable creep of U.S.—South Korean nuclear integration and the occasional threat displays of nuclear-capable military forces aimed at Pyongyang have not been the result of a grand American design. Rather,

crisis-driven ad hoc considerations by the political command in Washington and a failure of congressional oversight over the army's intimate nuclear liaison with South Korea have dominated policy.

Consequently, Korea is a virtual blind spot for the U.S. strategic community. Interviewed in his office, lined with shelves full of books on nuclear strategy, a former head of the Pentagon's Atomic Energy Division admitted, "I spent one half of 1 percent of my time thinking about Korea."²

This chapter analyzes whether nuclear war in Korea is possible. It suggests that three steps must be taken before Korea could become the flashpoint for a general nuclear conflagration: first, the outbreak of a north-south war; second, U.S. first use of nuclear weapons in Korea; and third, subsequent escalation. The insecurity that could lead to war between North and South Korea are examined in this chapter in relation to their respective geopolitical environments. The next two steps, U.S. first use and the spillover to a larger nuclear war, are analyzed in the next chapter.

From Nuclear Risk . . .

No one knows the risk of nuclear war in Korea. This ignorance is inherent in the nuclear conundrum. So long as nuclear weapons cannot be used, the risk cannot be defined. If they are ever detonated in war, the notion of risk will be meaningless.

Risk is a conceptual equation composed of two elements: the cost, and the probability of incurring the cost. Analysts debate the range of costs associated with nuclear war. There is little debate, however, that these effects are absolutely large, and in human terms, potentially infinite (extinction).

It is the probability component of estimating the risk of nuclear war which is intractable to analysis. Soothing talk about "risk" and "risk management" may convince strategists that they have reined in a "rogue event" like nuclear war.

In reality, they have done nothing of the kind. Such talk may give commanders the sense that they control the situation. In fact, they suffer from the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. So long as nuclear war remains a heuristic device, a concept rather than actuality, analysts are doomed to have no recourse to an observable frequency of nuclear wars. Consequently, their estimates of the probability are inherently subjective. Moreover, should nuclear war occur, it may only occur once. The term *probability* does not mean much for events that can only occur once.

If it were the collapse of a bridge or a cosmic event beyond human

control that was under consideration, then the concept of nuclear risk would be interesting only from a metaphysical perspective. Nuclear strategists would be the guardians of nuclear paradoxes, ignored by the politicians except when needed to legitimate a decision or to propound policies made on more mundane grounds than strategic theory. They would spend their days debating how many warheads fit on the top of a missile.

Unfortunately, as latter-day metaphysicians—or, in Fred Kaplan's memorable phrase, the wizards of Armageddon—their beliefs and perceptions are integral to decisions made before and during political crises. Insofar as they and their political masters *feel* “at risk,” the world *is* a more dangerous place.

... To Nuclear Possibility

Conversely, the *possibility* of nuclear war inheres in strategic realities that cannot be reduced to subjective estimations of probability. A nuclear analyst gropes intuitively around the strategic landscape much as blind people might approach a busy road. By listening carefully to the traffic on the road, they gain a “reading” of the surface to be crossed. By listening carefully, they can distinguish the direction and rhythm of the traffic from the white noise of the passing traffic. They can discern the shape of the road by tentative forays that do not commit them to proceed. Raw, pretheoretical apprehension of sounds, wind and smell suggests symbols that connote danger, safety, or uncertainty. Eventually, the blind person judges it prudent to cross.

But a hazardous pattern may lurk beyond the limits of apprehension, unrecognized in the white noise. The next step might prove fatal.

Viewed as a metaphysician, the analyst has subjective perceptions of nuclear risk that constitute risk. Treated as a blind person, the analyst's ignorance *creates* risk by concealing hazards and promoting unwarranted confidence. Patently, an analyst whose subjective appreciation of events suggests that nuclear risk is not present in an objectively lethal situation is the worst possible mentor to political commanders of nuclear forces. Unfortunately, Korea presents just such a case.

Escalation Paths

If the probability of nuclear war is elusive, how can one determine the escalation potential of a conflict involving nuclear weapons?

Graham Allison, Joseph Nye, and Albert Carnesale suggest that five general nuclear warpaths are plausible: accidental or unauthorized use;

surprise attack; crisis preemption; third-party catalytic war; and escalation from conventional war. They assert that nuclear-armed states may take more than one of these paths, and cross from one path to another.³ Considered alone in a specific context and with historical detail, each path looks less and less plausible. But they also warn that no path can be discounted since no one can predict the future with certainty. The future is often stranger than the past.

In the same way, torrential rain floods a drought-ridden plain before it seeps into the earth. This sequence does not mean that the same water will not work its way into tiny cracks, seep into channels, rush into creeks, and pour into raging rivers that eventually meet and form a torrent that sweeps away all that stands before it. Meteorologists do not even claim that they can forecast accurately when it will rain. Anyone claiming to predict flash floods accurately would be rash indeed.

It follows that any one or a combination of these paths may exist in a given situation. Rather than seeking to determine risk, therefore, all that one needs to know about a given hypothetical nuclear war is whether it is certain, possible, or impossible. Judging possibility is no less subjective than estimating risk. But determining whether an event is merely possible requires less information than estimating probability.

Conversely, when probability estimates have dubious conceptual status, asserting that a rare, catastrophic risk is merely possible makes no claims to spurious accuracy. In contrast to vague references to "risk" and "risk management," the "possibilist" method does not disguise the uncertainty inherent in the estimation.

No analyst can foresee all the paths that might be taken in all the possible situations in which nuclear weapons might be involved. That is why no one knows or can ever know the risk of nuclear war in Korea. Judgments about possibility will not only be incomplete; they will also be controversial. Inevitably, many indicators of possibility are ambiguous, and their significance will be contested.

But for paths that are agreed to exist, the uncertainty surrounding these judgments is overwhelmed by the potentially infinite costs of nuclear war. In such cases, those who control nuclear weapons should aim to avoid treading such paths. The paths that lead to nuclear war should never be explored in search of political or military shortcuts.

The long list of failed or nonexistent military deterrents in this century suggest that regional wars fought with conventional weapons are the most worrisome of the possible nuclear warpaths. Richard Lebow argues that conflicts involving states afflicted with serious domestic political problems can result in macho foreign policies, either to reassert a tough image, or to divert or contain domestic opposition. In this view, the most volatile areas are those containing two or more states suffering such

problems—like Europe in the days leading up to World War I, and like Korea today.⁴

In past decades, regional conflicts between the conventionally armed forces of the three great powers were all too conceivable. Currently, there are no regional conflicts between the United States, the Soviet Union, and China that could prompt a direct, conventional war between one or more of the great powers.

There are many regional conflicts in the world today. Only a few, however, pose the possibility of nuclear war. At these few sites—and at sea—the forward deployment of nuclear weapons peculiar to U.S. nuclear hegemony and its embodiment in nuclear alliances, bases, tactical nuclear weapons, and associated command and control systems brings the conventional warpath to a crossroad with the paths that lead to nuclear war. In Korea, the possibility that nuclear weapons would be used against North Korea or its allies over a conflict on the peninsula arises only because nuclear deterrence has been extended to Seoul and nuclear weapons deployed to underpin this commitment.

Escalation potential therefore breaks down into three analytical elements, each a step on the path to general nuclear war. Each can be posed as a question to be answered about a specific site like Korea. Is conventional war possible? Next, could nuclear weapons be used in that war? Finally, could “first use” spread to general nuclear war?

As will become evident, the answer in Korea to all three questions is “yes.” But that is not the end of the matter. As Allison and his co-workers suggest, action taken to get off one path may lead to another path.⁵

U.S. policymakers face a double-barreled nuclear dilemma in Korea. If U.S. nuclear-capable forces are withdrawn from Korea, one or both Koreas may produce a homegrown bomb—the subject of chapters 13 and 14. If they simply stay put, war and nuclear war may erupt in Korea.

Step One: Conventional War and Geopolitical Insecurity

It is hard to conceive of any U.S. first use of nuclear weapons in Korea except in response to a successful North Korean attack on U.S. forces and the capital city of Seoul. North Korean motivations are therefore central in evaluating whether conventional war, the first step toward nuclear war in Korea, is possible.

The previous chapter appraised North Korean fears of a combined U.S.–South Korean nuclear threat. This threat is an important and likely

primary determinant of the North Korean proclivity to undertake a preemptive attack on the south.

North Korean threat perceptions, however, do not just result from the view south of the demilitarized zone. They are also a function of the geopolitical environment in Northeast Asia. Of course, the same applies to the south, whose threat perceptions will affect those of the north in a crisis. This chapter therefore begins by investigating the evolution of this external security environment. It defines the superpowers' stakes in Korea and their ability to assure the security of their respective clients.

The next section describes the impact of the second cold war on the relative isolation and insecurity of North Korea. This isolation combined with paranoia in Pyongyang about the U.S.—South Korean nuclear threat generates the possibility of war in Korea—the first step on the path to nuclear war. The possibility of subsequent escalation to the second and third steps is dealt with in the next chapter where it is shown that first use in Korea could instigate Chinese and/or Soviet intervention in Korea, or U.S.-Soviet confrontation offshore in the North Pacific—the fatal third step.

Great-Power Relations and Korean Insecurity

Most of Korea's current troubles can be attributed to its being caught in the crossfire of great-power rivalry at the end of World War II. Consequently, the geopolitical environment in and around Korea is complex.

The north-south standoff in Korea is overlaid by at least five conflictual and six cooperative security alignments or alliances. The Soviet Union has conflicts with China, Japan, and South Korea; South Korea with China; and North Korea with the United States (and, some would say, Japan). The United States cooperates with South Korea, with Japan, and *de facto* with China; China with the United States, Japan, and North Korea; and the Soviet Union with North Korea.

What happens in Korea, therefore, can affect regional and even global great-power relationships. Conversely, Korea's external security environment often dramatically affects internal developments.

Evolution of the Six-Power System

Korea today is part of a long-standing six-power system that includes the Soviet Union, Japan, China, and the United States, as well as the north and the south. Both Koreas have two great power allies and two great-power enemies. North Korea is allied with China and the Soviet Union

and opposed to the United States and indirectly, Japan. For South Korea, the reverse holds true.

Immediately after World War II, the United States and its allies squared off against China and the Soviet Union in Korea, a standoff that led to—and followed—the Korean War.

Undergirded by the nuclear stalemate between the two superpowers, the period from 1953 until the late 1960s was relatively stable. Not only did alliances hold firm within the great-power coalitions; the United States and the Soviet Union exercised great control over their respective clients in the north and the south. The symmetric opposition of the bipolar regime virtually neutralized Korea as a site for active great power rivalry, and relationships froze hard.⁶

This situation changed sharply in the late 1960s, however when China broke with the Soviet Union, developed its own nuclear force, and moved toward the United States. Strategic nuclear capability, plus a huge population and territory and a long imperial history in Asia, catapulted China into the ranks of regional great powers. While China and the United States have since aligned themselves on security matters, there is no doubt that China pursues a far more independent foreign policy than does Japan.

Great-Power Triangle

This six-power system is now overlaid not with a superpower duopoly, but with a great-power triangle. In this tripolar relationship, the United States regards the Soviet Union as its primary challenger. When Vietnam exposed the limits to U.S. power, the United States quickly employed strategic diplomacy to bolster the U.S. position by opening relations with China. The United States finally “played” its China card against the Soviet Union in 1978 by normalizing relations with Beijing. The United States is now in the “happy” position of having China and the Soviet Union compete for U.S. favor and thus has the strongest position in the triangle. The result has been a resurgence of U.S. military strength in the Pacific since 1978.

Due to U.S. nuclear strength and global influence—including cooperative security relations with its secondary enemy, China—the Soviet Union regards the United States as its primary adversary. Bereft of political, ideological or economic influence in Asia, the Soviet Union has relied on military power in the form of a unilateral arms buildup, security alliances and arms transfers to match its American rival.

China’s arrival as a great power was heralded by its first nuclear test in 1964. Dismayed at Soviet revisionism and tardy defense of North

Korea in 1950, China in the 1958 Taiwan Straits crisis, and Cuba in 1962, China split with the Soviet Union. Since 1968, when its former ally rattled its nuclear rockets against China on the Far Eastern Sino-Soviet border, it has seen the Soviet Union as its primary threat.⁷

Short of strategic currency, especially of second-strike nuclear forces, China is the weakest of the great power trio. It therefore has little choice but to swallow its pride over U.S. policy on Taiwan to obtain American informal security commitments. It also supports U.S. alliances in the Pacific as a counterweight to Soviet power along its northern boundary.

Declining External Leverage

Economic and political development within both Koreas, moreover, has added to the complex and fluid nature of interstate relations in the region. Rapid growth and industrialization in both the north and the south generated increased trade and, in the case of South Korea, investment and financial links with other Pacific nations. This increased economic interdependence reduced the dependence of both Koreas on their great-power patrons. It also reduced great power control over the north and south.

U.S. leverage over Seoul was weakened by incorporating South Korea into the U.S. anti-Soviet strategy in the late 1970s. Until then, the stated U.S. rationale was that U.S. forces were in Korea solely to deter North Korea. While U.S. policymakers continued to take this position in public, in the 1980s it became clear that South Korea had been drawn into a broader U.S. regional strategy. Washington cannot openly admit this fact as doing so would enhance South Korean leverage over the United States and strengthen the opposition to the Seoul regime.

In Pyongyang, Soviet influence was eroded by the Sino-Soviet split, which polarized the North Korean alliance system and encouraged north Korean self-reliance. Recent Soviet and Chinese moves toward the United States, and more importantly, toward the south, have clouded North Korean-Chinese relations and increased North Korean insecurity.

Lightning Rod

Great power stakes in the global triangle still dominate how China, the Soviet Union, and the United States relate to Korea. The continuing tensions in the triangle make Korea a danger rather than an opportunity for advantage for the great powers. Conversely, the great powers all rely on triangular considerations to ensure that neither Korea can attack the other for fear of dragging in its adversary's allies. Simply put, they recognize that Korea has become a lightning rod for great-power conflicts within and even beyond the region.⁸

While the great powers have managed to define tacit rules of competition and conflict resolution at the great-power level, they have not extended this regime to regional issues. Consequently, with the exception of the 1986 INF agreement, virtually no arms control agreements pertain to Asia. Nor are there any regional diplomatic mechanisms for the great powers to settle conflicts apart from bilateral negotiations. Korea is no exception.

Great-Power Policies toward Korea

After 1945 U.S. security managers saw Korea primarily as an arena of global competition with the Soviet Union. Today, they are more concerned about Korea's impact on U.S. regional relations with Japan and China and thereby on the U.S. position in the great-power triangle.⁹ The United States is the pivot of this triangle, since its relations with China and the Soviet Union are less conflictual than those between the two Communist powers.

Iron Triangles

The United States has therefore had a relatively free hand with which to construct two security triangles at the regional level, both of which buttress South Korean security. The first triangle is constructed of two well-developed legs, the U.S.-China and U.S.-Japan security relationships, with the third resting on Sino-Japanese economic relations and minimal informal security cooperation (exchange of views and information). This triangle is a major obstacle to Soviet influence in Asia. While only an informal entente, this triangle has been an obvious aspect of Northeast Asian geopolitics since 1978.¹⁰

The second triangle is constituted by the U.S.-South Korean and U.S.-Japanese security relationships, complemented with a weak third leg of South Korean-Japanese security cooperation since 1979 and mediated by the United States. The U.S.-Japan security alliance is the common hypotenuse between the two triangles, thereby linking Japanese and Chinese security dependence on the United States to the fate of its ally, South Korea.

In Japan and Korea, therefore, U.S. nuclear hegemony has taken a form different from that in NATO. Rather than seeking to be consulted on doctrine and deployments, to have veto power over U.S. use of nuclear weapons on or from host nation territory, to share control over nuclear weapons—the cardinal characteristics of allied goals vis-à-vis U.S. nuclear forces in NATO—Japan has balked at such involvement. South Korea,

on the other hand, has been unable to wrest such concessions from the United States. U.S. nuclear hegemony in Japan remains institutionally weak and ideologically brittle. South Korea's integration with U.S. nuclear forces is still very limited, and the ideological aspect of nuclear hegemony is constricted to a very thin elite strata.

Moreover, the United States has been unable to create a multilateral institutional framework around the iron triangle of U.S., South Korean, and Japanese military power in Northeast Asia. The slightest hint of Japanese military dominance over South Korea evokes immediate antipathy from right- and left-wing circles in Korea. South Korean demands for multibillion-dollar concessional loans in return for Japan's free ride on South Korea's military front line are regarded in Tokyo as those of an upstart dragon. Apart from minor intelligence sharing, a few warship visits, and some personnel exchanges, South Korean-Japanese military integration remains nonexistent.¹¹

The United States has mediated in this conflict, and encouraged Japanese accommodation of South Korean demands. More importantly, in the early 1980s, the United States pushed for an overt security linkage between Japan and South Korea. When this proved politically impossible, the United States reconciled itself to achieving *de facto* integration. The U.S. Pacific Air Force already manages the defense of Northeast Asian airspace as an integrated entity. Similarly, military communications systems in Northeast Asia are run as a regional system, with a backbone running from Japan up the Korean peninsula and managed on a regional basis.¹²

To this end, the U.S. military place a high priority on achieving *interoperability* (or compatibility of equipment and procedures) of military communications.¹³ Fully integrating U.S.-Japan-South Korean military communications systems remains incomplete, however, not least because the Japanese military services find it difficult to agree on common standards with each other, let alone with the Americans. Nonetheless, the Northeast Asian military communications system shows that "subterranean" regional integration of military systems can become quite advanced before the political implications are recognized.

In effect, U.S.-orchestrated military integration substitutes for political integration, avoiding the political-ideological headaches of collective security organizations. Adm. Thomas Hayward, head of the conservative think tank Pacific Forum in Hawaii, underscored the point in 1983. "Our investment strategy for military systems," he said, "must bridge the bilateral political realities and be based on interoperable, compatible C³I [command and control, communications and intelligence] concepts that take on clear 'coalition' images in every possible dimension."¹⁴

That the United States has to respond to this imperative demonstrates

that regional conflicts block the full institutionalization of U.S. nuclear hegemony in the Pacific. For similar reasons, the United States has linked China and Japan in an informal security triangle, and is the common hypotenuse between this great-power triangle on the one hand, and the informal security triangle among South Korea, United States, and Japan on the other. Such alignments cannot be mentioned in public, let alone institutionalized and legitimated.

Japan's Impact

While the global great-power relationship is triangular, with its main currency being strategic nuclear weapons, Japan has become an economic superpower.¹⁵ In light of Japan's undeniable economic weight, regional great-power relations became more quadrilateral after the early 1970s than triangular.¹⁶

Japan's impact on the great-power balance derives from its economic ability to invest in development in China, the Soviet Far East, and Korea, and to trade competitively with all six states. In short, no one can ignore Japan's ability economically to strengthen or weaken partners or adversaries, nor its latent military potential. The other three great powers therefore contend for influence in Japan as an important balancing factor, seeking to obtain for themselves or to deny to others access to Japanese economic power.

In strategic terms, however, Japan is bound to be a relatively passive actor in East Asia. Since the Japanese government regards alliance with the United States as central to its security strategy, U.S. concerns hold sway over Japanese foreign policy. In the 1960s and early 1970s, Japan pursued a policy of equidistance from North and South Korea. The United States, however, successfully urged Japan to upgrade its support for South Korea relative to the north. This shift began in 1965 when Japan normalized relations with South Korea. It was formalized in the 1969 Nixon-Sato communiqué, which stated that South Korea was essential to Japanese security. It accelerated in 1983 when Japan granted concessional loans to South Korea as a barely disguised contribution to South Korea's defense costs.

Japan has thus become decisively committed to South Korea's security.¹⁷ Japan took this position, however, because it regards the U.S.-Japanese alliance as crucial, not because of South Korea's intrinsic importance. The U.S. alliance, however, exposes Japan to the risks of war in Korea by virtue of U.S. logistical bases in Japan which could draw North Korean, Soviet, or Chinese fire in a war with the United States.

Although Japan insists on keeping communications channels open in North Korea, much to South Korea's chagrin, the overall relationship is vastly to South Korea's direct and indirect benefit. In particular, due to

Japan's rising power within the U.S. sphere of influence, the United States can side with Japan or rely on Japanese influence to balance China, thereby decreasing China's ability to play a Soviet card against the United States in the great-power triangle.

The same factor operates in Japan's relationship with North Korea. Japan generally separates political from economic relations with the north (so long as North Koreans pay). Thus, the north cannot play a "Japan card" against either of its allies to obtain incremental advantage against the south.

Overall, while Japan can do little to induce the great powers to settle the Korea problem and prefers the status quo even more than China, Japan, like China, plays a central role in sustaining the informal process of quadrilateral great-power cross-contact with the two Koreas.

South Korea's Security Environment

In spite of its questionable reliability due to fatigue and overextension, therefore, U.S. grand strategy has created for South Korea a far more benign international environment than it faced in the mid-1970s. Of course, there is friction—some South Koreans contend that South Korea is being subordinated to Japan or that U.S. global anti-Soviet strategy provides North Korea with new opportunities for aggression against the south. But in the main, contention within the U.S.–South Korean alliance has been reduced to American objections to domestic South Korean political practices or to issues that are marginal to the overall alliance, such as South Korean military exports that undercut U.S. arms producers or create trade tensions.

Unfortunately, the new dawn rising over great-power relations in Northeast Asia is still refracted in Korea by the distorting lens of north-south hostility. Far from reducing tensions in Korea, therefore, China's tilt toward the United States in the great-power triangle has paradoxically increased superpower rivalry in Korea.

Instead of relaxing, South Korea has kept its bellicose stance toward the north and remains as fearful and suspicious as ever of its intentions. On the one hand, the national security elite in Seoul see an unabated threat to the north. On the other, they do not wholeheartedly believe American assurances that U.S. forces will remain in Korea under President Bush. The benign trends in the international environment—including contact with China and the Soviet Union—make the national security elite in Seoul more confident of their eventual victory over North Korea, and very insecure at the same time—hardly a reassuring image for the North Koreans.

Soviet Stakes

The Soviet Union has far more at stake in Korea than the United States, since Korea is adjacent to important strategic nuclear facilities and operating areas in the Soviet Far East and Sea of Japan. Yet the Soviet Union has also had the least say in the great-power politics of Korea due to its conflictual relationships with four out of six regional actors.

When U.S.-Soviet and Sino-North Korean relations deteriorated dramatically in 1983—the year of KAL 007, Grenada, and the Rangoon bombing—the Soviet Union and North Korea beefed up their military relationship. Soviet support for North Korea is limited, however, by North Korean suspicions that the Soviet Union is merely using it as bait to hook much bigger fish in the troubled waters of Northeast Asia. Almost locked out of great-power concert over Korea in the 1970s, not to mention the rest of Asia excepting Indochina, the Soviets appear to have played a military card in North Korea aimed at splitting the Sino-American security alignment because the United States and China back opposing sides in Korea.¹⁸

But the move has backfired: China has moved even closer to the United States since 1983, even while adopting equidistant rhetoric and despite the damage to Sino-American relations wrought by the Beijing massacre in 1989. Nonetheless, as the relatively isolated party in great-power and regional power relations, the Soviet Union has veto power over any Korean settlement struck by the other great powers.

China's Double Bind

China probably has more at stake in Korea than either the United States or the Soviet Union. Korea forms one boundary to China's industrialized Manchurian heartland, which the Chinese fear the Soviet Union is trying to encircle. The Chinese also have the most to lose in great power terms in Korea as a north-south war could destroy their security relationship with the United States, leaving China as the weakest great power trapped again between two antagonistic superpowers. Such a contingency would leave China in a true double bind, being extremely vulnerable to U.S. coercion and Soviet intimidation.

North Korea is also more important for China than for the Soviet Union because China is the weaker party in the Sino-Soviet feud and cannot afford to see the Soviets accrue any anti-Chinese strategic access in North Korea. China, however, cannot match Soviet military technology or economic aid to North Korea. Nor can China gain much advantage against the Soviet Union by tilting toward the United States and South

Korea because the Soviets can easily up the ante in North Korea, thereby offsetting any Chinese gains extracted from increasing U.S. pressure on the Soviet Union with losses in North Korea. Tilting toward North Korea to checkmate the Soviet Union does not gain advantage for China against the United States because the United States already considers China a latent enemy in Korea. Moving against the Soviet Union in North Korea, on the other hand, is viewed by Americans as in China's self-interest, with or without U.S. support and therefore unworthy of any payoff.

Since the end of the 1970s, therefore, the Chinese have refrained from attacking U.S. forces in Korea and no longer call for their *immediate* withdrawal.¹⁹ As China is less of a deterrent against U.S. military action against North Korea than the Soviet Union—having a far less credible nuclear retaliatory force than the Soviets—so alliance with China is militarily less useful to North Korea than with the Soviet Union. On the other hand, China can offer North Korea a diplomatic channel to the United States which the North Koreans can balance against their military dependence on the Soviet Union.²⁰ But China can only exert influence by availing North Korea of this channel when there is something to be gained by communicating with the United States. By 1983 it was evident that the North Koreans did not greatly value this diplomatic option. North Korea swung decisively away from China and allowed Soviet military intelligence flights against China to transit North Korea. This move violated North Korean neutralism in the Sino-Soviet military conflict. The Rangoon bombing that year was a further slap in the face to the Chinese, who were then communicating North Korean proposals for tripartite talks to the United States.

North Korea's Insecurities

The North Koreans have relied on separate security alliances since 1961 with the Soviet Union and China. The overt Sino-Soviet conflict in 1969, however, left North Korea's twin external supports looking like a shaky A-frame roof, the walls of which had collapsed. The split constrained North Korea's independence, and impelled it to undertake a massive military expansion to achieve military self-reliance.²¹

Faced with the Chinese embrace of the United States, its archenemy, North Korea either had to discard its anti-U.S. struggle, accommodate South Korea, and join the anti-Soviet camp—or decisively ally with the Soviet Union. The North Korean perception that the U.S. threat had increased and that South Korea had achieved military superiority may have hastened this shift.

Considering how many bridges he burned in 1983, Kim Il Sung must

be aghast today at the spectacle of Gorbachev's anti-Stalinist reform campaign, when a revisionist blizzard is already blowing over the Chinese border. Thus, when Kim Il Sung called in December 1986 for North Koreans to "guard against the ideological poison of capitalism and revisionism in our society," no one thought he was referring to South Korea!²²

North Korea has already seen both its allies initiate cross-contact with South Korea, starting in 1973 with the Soviet Union and in 1974 with China, and culminating with Soviet and Chinese attendance at the 1988 Olympic Games and its aftermath of fast-growing trade contacts between the south and Communist states. This move was fostered by South Korean flanking diplomacy aimed at undercutting North Korean alliances.

As the United States and the Soviet Union return to speaking terms, the trend in great-power relations therefore portends even greater isolation and insecurity for North Korea than in the past—the exact opposite of the international situation facing South Korea.

Some U.S. civilian strategists believe that the Soviets and the Chinese still extend nuclear deterrence to North Korea. They admit that these assurances are so weak that North Korean leaders worry that the United States may not be deterred from using its nuclear weapons.²³ By this logic, the North Koreans cannot assume that U.S. first use is not possible. Therefore, they conclude, U.S. nuclear deterrence against North Korea is credible.

The problem with this logic is that it is a two-edged sword, cutting both ways. If the North Koreans fear that a southern, combined U.S.—South Korean attack is imminent and believe that their allies will do little or nothing to preclude it, then they may conclude that their only credible defensive strategy is to adopt an offensive deterrent threatening massive preemption.

It is clear from this analysis that South Korea should be reassured by the trends of the external geopolitical environment in Northeast Asia. The effect may be offset by the uncertainty associated with general loosening of ties and rapid realignments associated with the breakup of superpower blocs.

It is equally obvious that the same conclusion does not apply to North Korea. The north faces the dismal prospects of declining military power relative to South Korea; vigorous U.S. security commitments to its adversary, South Korea, and main ally, China; contact between its allies China and the Soviet Union and its archenemy, South Korea; and dependence on an ally, the Soviet Union, which it plainly distrusts.

It would be imprudent, therefore, to suggest that Pyongyang's geopolitical environment constrains North Korean adventurism against the south. If anything, one might expect isolation to foster paranoia in Pyongyang. The previous chapters suggested that nuclear threats may deepen

North Korean anxieties rather than deter northern aggressive intentions. Internal divisions within North Korea's ruling elite could also result in provocations against the United States and South Korea. Whether induced by domestic dissension or by paranoia resulting from the southern threat and external isolation, combined with residual aggressive impulses to reunify Korea by force, the first step along the path to nuclear war, North Korean preemptive attack, cannot be discounted. What about the second step, American first use?

First Use

I'm the only division commander that every day and every night sends out people on ambushes and patrol in the DMZ with the sole mission to shoot folks.

—Gen. Robert Kingston, commander of Second Division, 1980

Logically, there are two scenarios in which the United States could launch a nuclear attack against North Korea: a tactical battlefield attack, and a decisive rear attack. Of course, one or both Koreas could be caught up in other conceivable nuclear wars. In an all-out global nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union, for example, one or both superpowers could destroy its adversary's Korean ally in revenge. In a "limited" (that is, a regional) war, one superpower could attack its competitor's Korean ally with a nuclear weapon as a "shot across the bow."

In a protracted but limited global superpower war, one superpower could divert the other by a nuclear attack on its adversary's Korean ally. In a variant of this latter scenario, one superpower could unleash "its" Korea on the other to tie down the other superpower's forces—a favorite of the first Reagan administration.

This chapter, however, deals only with nuclear wars that start in Korea, although being caught in the crossfire of a superpower conflict starting outside Korea is something that rightly concerns many Koreans.²

Battlefield Attack

In the battlefield attack scenario, U.S. nuclear weapons would stun a North Korean attack and wrest back the initiative in the frontal battle zone. This "limited" nuclear attack would also constitute a shot across the bows of Pyongyang, Moscow, and Beijing. If the attack from the north was clearly offensive, the United States could portray its nuclear retaliation as "defensive." If the weapons were exploded south of the demilitarized zone or not far north, the United States might argue that this use of nuclear weapons is acceptable.

U.S. commanders also believe that they would obtain approval for

escalation to nuclear war in Korea far faster than in Europe. This quick pace follows from the fact that the Second Infantry Division is purposely placed "in harm's way," to make automatic U.S. involvement in renewed war. As U.S. Commander in Korea Gen. Jack Vessey told Congress in 1977,

I do have the authority to fight back and defend Korea with whatever troops we have. We are not going to call Washington before we shoot back, I assure you of that. . . I don't think that the President has a choice. If the North Koreans attack, we are into it already. We man the air defense system. We expect the first thing they are going to attack with is their air. We have no choice but to shoot down their airplanes.³

Second, they believe that they will receive allied agreement to escalating to nuclear war faster in Korea than in Europe. As Gen. Edward Meyer said in Seoul in 1983, "It's far simpler here than in Europe where consultations have to be made with 15 different sovereign nations."⁴

Generic army doctrine for battlefield use of nuclear weapons, according to its *FM-100-5* manual, is to use a sharp burst of nuclear firepower to regain the initiative. A hypothetical nuclear "package" for a battlefield attack in Korea might include two atomic demolition mines, thirty artillery, and five or ten aircraft-delivered nuclear weapons, to be delivered over a specified time and area. Typical battlefield targets for nuclear weapons in Korea would be hardened aircraft shelters, railheads, concentrated attacking or follow-on troops, and massed tanks.⁵

To develop target lists, U.S. Forces Korea may use the model developed recently by BDM Corporation which analyzes logistics and ground forces for Pacific Command's Theater Nuclear Forces Program. The model provides a quantitative estimate of delays and troop movements resulting from nuclear attacks on transportation networks. "Attack strategies that were tested," states one report, "are relevant to a surprise attack against the Republic of Korea."⁶ In 1982 U.S. Forces Korea imported Pacific Command's Nuclear Weapons Analysis System. This system aids the "target, aim-point and weapon selection functions associated with nuclear contingency planning cycle."⁷

Strategic Attack

A second conceivable use of nuclear weapons in Korea is a strategic rear attack. Rather than using nuclear weapons to gain a battlefield advantage, the United States might consider their decisive use in a punitive urban-industrial attack on North Korea of the kind considered by Gen. Douglas MacArthur in 1950.

Today, however, the United States is more likely to fire “smart and small” nuclear blows to terminate the war. These weapons would knock out command and control posts, communication facilities, key logistic sites, and rear forces. The attacks would allow deep strike forces to fan out over North Korea and to attack Pyongyang—possibly in exchange for the loss of Seoul.

These two scenarios both assume authorized, controlled nuclear retaliation on the part of the United States. Even if the president decided in the midst of war that nuclear attack would be militarily absurd, as chapter 11 suggested he might, he still has to exert control over the forward-deployed nuclear forces to avoid inadvertent escalation. Whether for execution of authorized nuclear attack or simply to withdraw already deployed nuclear ground forces, however, this control cannot be assured in Korea.

Loss of Communications

A battlefield attack could spiral out of control due to loss of communications with nuclear units. The last chapter canvassed the possibility that nuclear delivery teams could lose communications en route to firing sites. Another route to unauthorized use arises once the nuclear weapons have arrived at the firing site.

In 1968, for example, the Seventh Infantry Division reported that it struggled with the perennial communications difficulties associated with decentralizing control of nuclear weapons to enhance readiness. The division reported that assigning nuclear weapons to low-level commanders “would facilitate the timely utilization” of nuclear weapons. But they also found that the division’s radios were “somewhat unreliable due to the age of the sets and the lack of necessary . . . spare parts.” Communications with corps-level commanders had to travel via eight terminals over six radios, resulting in “very poor quality circuits.” All in all, the division found that

during field exercises nuclear fire planning was in effect, however, the mechanics of nuclear fire requesting and the actual firing of the weapon were unrealistic. The fire missions concerned were not transmitted to the delivery unit on [*sic*] a timely manner and there was a general breakdown in the use of nuclear weapons on a training basis.⁸

Today, U.S. Nuclear Support Teams delivering and firing nuclear weapons from South Korean artillery units would carry AN/VRC-46 radio sets with encrypting capabilities and AN/GRC-160 radios in the trucks, all equipped with a 13-meter-high OE-254 antenna.⁹ The VRC-46 is a short-range (nominal 8-kilometer) FM two-way radio-telephone operating in the

30–75.97 MHz frequencies at 50 kHz intervals. The GRC-160 is likewise a short-range transceiver, being a manpack radio set that runs off the vehicle battery and operates on the 30–52.95 MHz and 53–75.95 MHz frequencies.¹⁰

Each nuclear team has an allocated frequency and call-sign to communicate by FM radio with its controlling headquarters. Two backup “re-transmit” frequencies are also allocated to each team.¹¹ The radio net is rife with potential problems.

The ARC-54 radio units used by helicopter delivery vehicles, for example, can only broadcast on frequencies up to 69.95 MHz. As the VRC-46 ground-based radios can operate *above* 69.95 MHz, the helicopters assigned to FM radio nets for delivery of nuclear weapons could find themselves incommunicado—as occurred in the 1988 Team Spirit exercise.¹²

Deploying more modern equipment, however, would not ensure that communications would be kept open. At the frontline storage site prior to dispersal to artillery batteries, nuclear units would lay landlines from the tent containing nuclear weapons at their location to their detachment’s Tactical Operations Center and Emergency Action Facility.¹³ Such units may find themselves out of communication due to terrain and to local antagonism.

In 1983, for example, Second Infantry Division artillery units discovered that they were still subject to difficulties observed a decade earlier. Artillery battalions often lost communications contact with their forward observer teams. These teams operate on mountains, which often interrupt line-sight radio. They also had great difficulty communicating with South Korean artillery units due to different equipment and languages.

Moreover, the telephone wire that links the commander’s battalion fire center and the actual firing battery was not obstructed by a mountain, but it might as well have been:

Korean civilians proved to be the Achilles’ heel of this system, for it was not uncommon for wire laid through a small Korean village to disappear within minutes after it was laid (WD-1 wire has a relatively high scrap value in Korea). On other occasions, an irate farmer would cut the wire simply because a unit was occupying his field.¹⁴

In wartime, U.S. intelligence units would do well to look out for wire-snipping North Koreans posing as farmers. For North Korea, states a U.S. Army manual, will place the “highest priority” on disrupting communications “associated with NBC weapons,” especially “artillery, rocket and air forces possessing NBC projectiles and missiles and their associated control systems.”¹⁵

Even if the local terrain and personnel were friendly, North Korean forces would also place a high priority on jamming the vulnerable satellite UHF leg of the communications leg that supports the CINC C2 net of UHF, FM, and HF radio systems in U.S. Forces Korea.¹⁶

Unreliable communications would be the norm in this hostile environment. Nuclear commanders should therefore expect to lose communications with nuclear artillery units, raising the specter of loss of control in the case of the battlefield nuclear attack.

Even if communications are kept open with the frontline units, there is no assurance that lines to the United States would remain operative. A 1984 Congressional report noted that a key Seoul communications facility inhabited a single-story, unhardened building within 10 kilometers of North Korean artillery. At Seoul, they found that a nodal point in the U.S. Defense Communications System (DCS) was not hardened against attack and was colocated with petroleum tanks. At Taegu, they discovered that the primary AC power supply for a major technical control and automatic switching center was within 10 feet of a public street.

"There is a considerable shortfall of equipment to replace the DCS system," concluded the Committee, "if it is eliminated early in a war (likely to happen) making stable communications to the U.S. doubtful in wartime."¹⁷ Presumably if the White House picked up the phone to Korea and it was dead, officials could conclude that they were at war with North Korea.

There are many reasons why the National Command in Washington might not want to be at war with North Korea. North Korea might not have started the war. The United States might be preoccupied elsewhere. The superpowers might be at each other's throats already. Yet U.S. involvement, working communications or not, appears to preclude much deliberation.

Assuming that communications back to Washington work, explained a congressional aide concerned with Korea, "the corps commander calls up and says American boys are being slaughtered."¹⁸ All the pressure is on the president to permit first use. The only salvation in such a situation might lie in the failure of communications. If U.S. Forces Korea do not receive authentic emergency action messages from the National Command, they would presumably follow their strict orders not to fire nuclear weapons and would suffer the consequences of being overrun.

Loss of Control

With few exceptions, a U.S. nuclear weapon carries a lock to stop unauthorized use or tampering with the weapon which is called Permissive

Action Link, or PAL. The PAL is a mechanical or electronic coding switch that makes arming of or access to nuclear weapons dependent upon possession of a special code. W-33 and W-48 artillery nuclear warheads use mechanical combination locks. Only the neutron bomb W-79 artillery warheads (if these are stationed in South Korea) (would carry the “command disable” electronic features (see table 6-1).¹⁹

Loss of control could arise from a mutinous South Korean security force trying to stop an imminent U.S. nuclear attack. “We weren’t concerned,” said a former Pentagon official, “that the Korean artillery crew might be used to lift the projectile into the tube. But the Koreans could take over, bust off a lock. The more they know about nuclear operations, the easier it is for them to circumvent controls.”²⁰

Conversely, loyal South Korean military forces could take over a U.S. weapon in order to push a reluctant United States over the nuclear brink. A North Korean commando force could also wrest control of a nuclear artillery projectile—a fact recognized in the U.S. nuclear unit’s instructions that warn them that they may suffer a “major attack by guerrilla or underground forces” (see chapter 7).²¹

Unlike their South Korean counterparts, however, the North Koreans probably would not know how to circumvent the permissive action link. They might, however, be able to persuade a South Korean to switch sides, or have agents placed in nuclear units. It is conceivable that they could fire the nuclear weapon at U.S. or South Korean forces, or simply fire in any direction to sway Korean and international public opinion in favor of the north.

Escalation Spiral

Would the first use of nuclear weapons spark a widening nuclear war? There are persuasive arguments that action might not remain limited to the actors on the peninsula.

Even if control is maintained on the battlefield, the Soviet Union and China share borders with their ally, North Korea. Yet, U.S. strategists are remarkably relaxed about Soviet or Chinese nuclear forces in and around a Korean war involving U.S. nuclear forces and potential first use of nuclear weapons. According to James Martin, a former high level Pentagon manager of theatre nuclear activities,

Any [first use of nuclear weapons to repel a north Korean attack] poses escalation risks, but the Soviet Union is not likely to be involved directly in a limited nuclear attack on South Korea. Therefore, limited nuclear weapons employment by the United States in Korea is not likely to escalate to U.S.-Soviet nuclear war.”²²

Another senior Pentagon official told the author in December, 1986,

Of course, what the Soviets would say is something else. But we would not be destroying all of North Korea. We would certainly not be threatening the Soviets. They would conduct an all-out propaganda war against us, but they would also lean on North Korea. This would be good because logistics support will be North Korea's key problem.²³

Other military analysts and strategists, however, are less sanguine. According to Adm. Noel Gayler, former commander-in-chief of the Pacific,

It is very difficult to think of using nuclear weapons [in Korea] in a way which doesn't contain the seeds of escalation. There will be backers again in a war on the Korean Peninsula and a strong political temptation to raise the ante when either side [the United States or the Soviet Union] are involved. The step from a nuclear war involving our proteges, as it were, and nuclear war between ourselves [the United States and the Soviet Union] is a very narrow one, a very dangerous one.²⁴

Admiral Gayler is an unusually skeptical military officer. But his views seem to be shared by others in the Pentagon. As Nathan White put it in a 1977 study for the Pentagon, later published; "That [the superpowers] would permit . . . a confrontation to occur in Korea may appear improbable. Nonetheless, it is generally recognized that the possibility does exist and is extremely important because of the incalculable effects it could have if it did materialize."²⁵

More recently, a report to the U.S. Defense Nuclear Agency explicitly stated that China may enter a war in Korea due to historical precedent and current commitments to Pyongyang, although it assumed that Beijing would delay its intervention until it was sure that North Korea could not defeat U.S. and South Korean forces. On that basis, the report analyzed potential "high payoff" Chinese nuclear targets in North Korea such as transport and logistical sites. "Nuclear attacks," noted the consultant, "also have the potential of causing increased rebuild times and hence longer delays."²⁶

From First Use to Great-Power Nuclear War

A variety of evidence indicates that U.S. forces in Korea have actually concerned themselves with the possibility of nuclear escalation. In 1967, for example, the Eighth Army instructed noncombatants that "since, in the event of nuclear attack, large areas may still be subject to danger from

radioactivity, release from shelters will be on a selective and local basis with priority given to personnel who must carry out emergency operations."²⁷

More recently (March 1979), Boeing Aerospace Company conducted two assessments of the endurance of communication equipment at Yongsan and Camp Walker against electromagnetic pulses (EMP) from high altitude nuclear explosions. The report on Camp Walker emphasized that the assessments and hardening concepts are based on the most severe, high-altitude, nuclear EMP environment.²⁸ In 1980 the Pentagon revealed that it had hardened the hangar doors for aircraft shelters at Osan Air Base to protect against "nuclear overpressure."²⁹

Such studies and activities are in part the result of bureaucratic implementation of organizational repertoires with no particular relevance to Korea. But they are equally consistent with the belief that U.S. forces in Korea will be subject to Chinese or Soviet nuclear attack in a Korean war; or to Soviet nuclear attack in a war in which Korea is caught in the crossfire.

That the U.S. military think that the Chinese or the Soviets may join a nuclear war in Korea (as distinct from preparing for the Korean aspect of a global nuclear war) may be inferred from a number of additional indicators.

The Second Infantry Division's chemical officer, for example, is instructed to prepare for "defense against nuclear, biological, and chemical attacks."³⁰ The division engineer's instructions are even more explicit: "Provides technical assistance and construction effort for NBC, to include construction of nuclear permanent and improvised protective shelters, recovery of military installations *from nuclear attack* and use of earthmoving equipment in NBC decontamination."³¹

A U.S. Army field manual on the North Korean military lists the indicators that would warn of impending, "typical" North Korean military activities. "Special or unusual activity by front-line troops," states the manual, indicates that they may be constructing "unusually deep or covered foxholes before using a nuclear weapon." Adds the manual, "Disappearance of known enemy agents from specific areas" may be explained as follows: "Before a nuclear attack, agents may be ordered to leave the area."³²

As there is no evidence that North Korea has acquired nuclear or radiological weapons, one might discount U.S. training for North Korean nuclear attack as a case of military worst-case planning. It could be interpreted, however, to mean that the U.S. military believe that the Soviets may "lend" the North Koreans nuclear weapons to deter U.S. first or second nuclear strike, even while they distance themselves from direct involvement.

Though most analysts dismiss this notion as absurd, given the Soviet's past prudence and current circumspection on sharing nuclear weapons, it is conceivable that extreme circumstances (including U.S. pressure in Europe) might induce the Soviets to introduce nuclear weapons into North Korea with Korean logistical support—just as the United States does today in South Korea. However remote this possibility, the U.S. military's preparations for Soviet or Chinese direct or indirect nuclear attack in Korea contradict the notion that the United States can quarantine the Peninsula in the case of U.S. nuclear first use.

Spillover to Naval-Nuclear War

The few U.S. officials who have pondered the escalation possibilities in Korea have focused on the possibility of direct Soviet intervention in the ground war. Just as a faulty span may not be recognized before a bridge collapses, so unrecognized paths to nuclear war may weave across the historical landscape to an ambush of nuclear officials by an unexpected conjuncture of events or a twist of fate.

A nuclear ground war in Korea may be a good example of a nuclear wild card. It could “spill over” to a superpower naval-nuclear shootout in the Northwest Pacific. Particularly relevant is the Soviet perception of U.S. antisubmarine capabilities and land-attack cruise missiles in the North Pacific.

The conventional U.S. land-attack cruise missile is supposed to disable Soviet command and control posts, air defenses, and airfields so that U.S. aircraft carriers can fight their way close enough to launch their bombers against targets in the Soviet Far East. In 1984 U.S. Secretary of the Navy John Lehman testified that the navy intends to rollback the Soviet submarines in the Sea of Okhotsk and off Petropavlovsk to allow U.S. carrier task groups to approach striking distance from the Soviet mainland.³³

In February 1986 Adm. James Watkins confirmed officially the anti-ballistic submarine component of the maritime strategy.³⁴ In the context of nuclear ground war in Korea, the most important aspect of this strategy is that intended to keep Soviet attack submarines and the surface fleet attending to the protection of Soviet ballistic missile-firing submarines in the Northwest Pacific. Besides taking aim at Soviet attack submarines, U.S. antisubmarine activity will also target Soviet ballistic missile-firing submarines.

This strategy may reinforce Soviet security paranoia of the kind exhibited in the KAL 007 tragedy. Indeed, a key aspect of General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's speech in Vladivostok in July 1986 was his desire to negotiate controls on antisubmarine warfare in the Northwest Pacific—a

goal reiterated in July 1987.³⁵ Gorbachev knows that in a major ground war in Korea, U.S. and Soviet Pacific Fleets will intermingle off the shores of Korea. U.S. aircraft carriers and submarines fighting North Korea will overlap with the operating areas of crucial Soviet second strike nuclear forces in the Sea of Japan and elsewhere in the Northwest Pacific.³⁶

Crisis Control

Past crises show that superpower commands have not fully controlled their forces as intended. At the height of the Cuban missile crisis, for example, each superpower perceived the other to be sending a strong message via military actions. U.S. decision-makers, however, were completely unaware that the U.S. Navy was depth-bombing Soviet submarines to force them to the surface. And Cuban air defenses autonomously shot down U.S. intelligence planes, totally out of Soviet control. Yet Washington saw these actions as signaling Soviet hard-line intent.

One cannot be sanguine that superpower crisis management of a war in Korea would be much better. Indeed, with Chinese involvement complicating communications, it might be even harder to maintain control today than in the past.

The U.S. command and control system is loosely coupled. Loss of control over nuclear weapons that results from overextended communication systems and forward deployment of tactical nuclear weapons will not therefore automatically result in other U.S. theater commands firing at will. If anything, the global command and control systems for nuclear war would tend to dampen such errors.

By the same token, these forward-deployed U.S. nuclear forces may become entangled in incidents and wars that provoke a Soviet response. Although the Soviets do not practice extended deterrence in the Far East by forward-deploying nuclear weapons, their centralized command and control system is tightly coupled and tends to amplify errors made by the political command. The events leading up to and following the KAL 007 tragedy are a good example of how the strategic context and the interaction of U.S. and Soviet command and control systems can result in pathological responses. There is little comfort to be gained, therefore, from how the superpowers' command and control systems interact at the global level. If anything, these systems are the kindling around the tinder in Korea.

Inadvertence

Recent experience shows that the potential for inadvertent clashes and escalation at sea exists offshore from Korea as in few other places in the world. In 1987, for example, U.S. Navy bombers flew at least twenty-four

mock bombing attacks against the Soviet city and missile submarine port, Petropavlovsk, from Adak in the Aleutians. The flights were ordered by the Pacific Fleet commander in Hawaii in response to Soviet intelligence flights around Alaska. The navy ordered these mock attacks without consulting Washington and continued them until shortly before the December 1987 summit. This was the first time ever that either superpower has sent armed supersonic bombers on a beeline run for an adversary's city.³⁷ In January 1988 a U.S. Navy P-3 intelligence plane, "playing games," came within 15 feet of colliding with a Soviet jet fighter over the Sea of Japan.³⁸

In wartime, mistakes with much more serious consequences could occur. The United States could, for example, mistake Soviet for North Korean submarines. Or a U.S. admiral could "bend" the naval rules of engagement should the Soviets pose the threat of a saturation Backfire bomber attack on aircraft carriers in the Sea of Japan or near Petropavlovsk. The Soviets could do something equally or even more stupid. Such possibilities contain the seeds of misperceptions and inadvertent entanglement that could lead to superpower combat in the North Pacific and to global nuclear war.³⁹

Blind Spot

The potential for spillover from U.S. nuclear first use in Korea to superpower naval-nuclear war offshore is not recognized today in arms control circles in Washington. Yet the U.S.-Soviet agreement to avoid incidents on the high seas was concluded in direct response to collisions between superpower warships in 1968 in the waters off Korea.

The oversight derives from Washington's well-known historical amnesia, the fixation of the State Department on alliance management, and the bureaucratic separation between land and sea by the army and navy war planners in Korea and in the Pacific Fleet.

The virtual demise of the official arms control agencies in Washington since 1980 ensures that the linkage between the Korean flashpoint and naval-nuclear war—analogue to the relationship between a fuse and a powderkeg—remains neglected in the United States. The similar lack of concern in Korean and Japanese security circles over arms control in the North Pacific allows Congress to ignore the issue. In turn, congressional oversight committees have not retrieved the issue from where it has fallen between these bureaucratic cracks.

Ignorance, however, may not be bliss. A blind spot keeps important information hidden from view. The American political system appears incapable of recognizing and responding to the first barrel of the nuclear dilemma in Korea. Unfortunately, the same seems to be the case with the second barrel, the potential for nuclear proliferation in Korea.

13

Hanky-panky

Were we trying to reassure the South Koreans? It was a very marginal factor with Park and Chun. They put very little weight on it. Of course they liked having nuclear weapons in Korea more than I did. But they didn't look to nuclear weapons as the main deterrent force. They looked to their own forces and the trip-wire that would bring in American air support and then ground reinforcement. But they preferred to have large numbers of nuclear weapons in Korea.

—Interview, former U.S. ambassador to South Korea, May 1987

The second barrel of the U.S. nuclear dilemma is Korea's proliferation potential. Most analysts of nuclear proliferation view this problem as afflicting only South Korea. South Korea's integration into U.S. nuclear forces (chapter 7) and North Korea's response to U.S. nuclear strategy (chapter 8) suggest that this outlook is shortsighted. As a potential proliferant in its own right or as a stimulant to South Korean proliferation, North Korea weighs as heavily in the proliferation equation as the south.

Unfortunately, as this chapter will show, the United States has concentrated wholly on South Korea's nuclear aspirations. It has virtually ignored North Korea's proliferation incentives. Moreover, U.S. non-proliferation policy in South Korea has been fitful, inconsistent, and often subordinated to larger strategic goals rooted in narrow organizational interests. U.S. *nonproliferation* policy has been reduced to how best to *reassure* South Korea. The impact of the larger South Korean conflict and geopolitical environment on the proliferation dynamic in Korea has been virtually ignored.

Nonproliferation in Korea was a perfect ideological weapon for the plotters against Carter's withdrawal policy. South Korean proliferation potential gave the U.S. Army a cost-free lever with which to activate liberals and conservatives against withdrawal. This strategem implicitly suggests that the second barrel of the nuclear dilemma in Korea may not actually be loaded.

Accordingly, this chapter begins by weighing the importance of Ko-

rean nonproliferation in the political and bureaucratic calculus in Washington. It then revisits the South Korean nuclear bomb program between 1971 and 1975. It reveals hitherto unknown information about on-going machinations by South Korea to acquire technology which suggest that South Korea has not given up its nuclear aspirations. It concludes that the second barrel to the nuclear dilemma is indeed loaded.

U.S. Nonproliferation Policy

Although U.S. nuclear strategy in Korea originates in the conflict with the north, more recently it has been justified as a way to control South Korea. Whatever the impact on the north, it is said, the United States has to keep nuclear weapons in Korea to reassure South Korea so that it will not make its own nuclear weapons. Moreover, the United States cannot expect to retain operational control over South Korea's military unless it keeps forces in Korea.

Having the military reins in American hands is assumed to restrain the South Koreans from retaliating against North Korean provocations, as was reportedly the case in 1969, after the North Korean attack on the presidential Blue House; in 1976, after the Panmunjon incident; and in 1983, after the Rangoon bombing of the South Korean President and his entourage.¹ In short, keeping American nuclear-capable forces in South Korea is seen to be a cheap way of keeping Americans in command and South Koreans from becoming a loose cannon. Thus, crisis management and allied reassurance arguably converge in U.S. nonproliferation policy in Korea.

This nonproliferation rationale may not be very important in the actual formation of U.S. nuclear policy in Korea. It may only be a foil used in bureaucratic battles over more fundamental political issues in the U.S. security commitment to South Korea. Nonproliferation concerns, for example, reportedly did not figure in Presidential Review Memorandum 13, the basis of Carter's withdrawal policy, or in PRM 45, the decision document that led to Carter's reversing the withdrawal decision.² Some high-level officials in the U.S. embassy in Seoul, for example, state that it was not a central consideration in nuclear policy in the 1970s. But others argue the opposite. One important figure in U.S. Korea policy at that time, for instance, argued that reassurance of South Korea to contain proliferation *was* an important factor in decision making.

For South Korea, the nuclear weapons provided psychological reassurance. It was a deterrent against them going nuclear. They would have known if we had withdrawn all our nuclear weapons. It would have been

a major impetus to their own nuclear program, that was always hovering just at the edges. To have done something that would have changed their level of confidence that we would respond would have so unsettled South Koreans that they would have felt they had to acquire their own nuclear deterrent.³

A third U.S. official with nonproliferation responsibilities in the Carter administration argued that they took the linkage “for granted”:

The South Koreans never explicitly linked troop withdrawal to nuclear proliferation. They didn't have to because they knew it was in the back of our minds. If we removed the troops, we would have less leverage. Those of us responsible for nonproliferation were intensely aware of this and made considerable effort on the inside to press for reversal of the withdrawal decision. We took the problem for granted. But there was no precise assessment of the proliferation implications of withdrawal.⁴

Nonetheless, one group of highly placed U.S. officials took the problem seriously enough in 1977 to discuss leaving a fake nuclear storage site at Kunsan to reassure the South Koreans. The idea was dismissed, said a participant, “as the South Koreans would have immediately gotten onto it because American guard behavior would have changed if nothing was really there.”⁵

As a tactical ploy, however, the proliferation issue was high-caliber ammunition in the political battles over the withdrawal decision. The South Koreans themselves were well aware of this dimension of the political struggle. The August 22, 1978, editions of all major papers in Seoul covered the reported planned withdrawal of U.S. Army nuclear weapons in 1978, and of air force nuclear weapons in 1979. Two days later, an editorial in the *Hankook Ilbo* stated that the “early withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons is wrong” and that “our own preparations are more vital than the nuclear umbrella”—clearly a trial balloon.⁶

The Stilwell consultants' 1978 report to the army on U.S. strategic interests in Northeast Asia had already picked up on this argument. After referring to South Korean foreign minister Pak Tong-Chin's June 30, 1977, speech saying that although party to the Nonproliferation Treaty, South Korea would make an “independent judgment” if the country's survival were at stake, the report turned the tables on Carter. “The U.S. force presence in Korea,” they suggested “is an arms control factor.”⁷

U.S. nuclear weapons in South Korea, they said, “have been an added deterrent, and therefore an antiproliferation factor.” They concluded: “If they are removed, in addition to the withdrawal of the ground combat forces, two significant elements of deterrence will vanish and the effect on regional non proliferation could shift from positive to negative.”⁸

In January 1979 the Senate Armed Services Committee publicly fired the nonproliferation argument back at Carter's policy:

We do not believe that a continuation of the administration's troop withdrawal program as scheduled, especially in the absence of reciprocal North Korean measures, advances [U.S. nonproliferation] policy. Indeed, it could encourage South Korea to develop its own nuclear capability. We note that it is the judgement of many U.S. officials and Korean experts we talked to that the withdrawal could contribute to an erosion of existing ROK confidence in U.S. reliability and increase Korean pressure to develop nuclear weapons of their own. This would be particularly true if withdrawal were attended, as it now appears to be, by South Korean perceptions of a worsening non nuclear military balance, especially on the ground. Press speculation that a major portion of the U.S. nuclear weapons allegedly deployed on the peninsula will be removed along with U.S. combat units can only intensify whatever feelings of nuclear insecurity the ROK may now have . . . In short, in Korean eyes, to the extent that the withdrawal of U.S. ground combat troops degrades the value of the U.S. commitment to the ROK's defense, it heightens the risk of an independent, one-on-one arms race on the peninsula that could eventually spark competition in nuclear armaments.⁹

Without lifting a finger politically, the army thereby enlisted much of Congress to its cause of reversing the withdrawal decision on the grounds that its nuclear forces would reassure the south and avoid proliferation. This activation was reminiscent of the linkage between the army's interests in Korea and the State Department's interest in Japan which led to common cause against Carter's withdrawal policy.

Proliferation Stakes

Whatever this matter's weight in U.S. policymaking, there is no doubt that ensuring that the two Koreas do not become the sixth or seventh nuclear-armed powers *should* be an important U.S. policy goal. Nor is there much doubt that keeping nuclear weapons in Korea has proliferation-related impacts, as Leslie Brown wrote in 1977, when he was in the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs:

The problem is that the United States, not only by keeping weapons in the country for many years, but also by talking about them, has made it clear that she [*sic*] considers them essential for Korea's defence. This message has clearly imprinted itself on the Korean consciousness, as their efforts to acquire weapons-related nuclear technology show . . . [O]ne cannot ignore the fact that the Koreans believe that there is a military

case for the weapons, because past American actions seemed to confirm it. Given that belief, removal of the weapons is certain to reinforce and accelerate any native Korean effort that may now be under way, with serious consequences for non proliferation throughout the West Pacific.¹⁰

Ironically, however, the nuclear strategy not only affects the south, by reassuring or stimulating a South Korean nuclear weapons program; it also increases the incentives for North Korea to proliferate—a virtually unnoticed side effect of a nuclear reassurance strategy that is aimed at the South. Recent shifts in the great power security environment around Korea, combined with paranoia induced by U.S. nuclear weapons, may increase North Korean insecurity to the point where the North Koreans reach for the bomb, whatever the consequences. The shift in the international environment and in the north-south balance of power have radically recast the proliferation dynamic in Korea.

In short, far from ameliorating the threat of nuclear proliferation in Korea, a strategy of nuclear reassurance to South Korea accelerates an already nascent north-south Korean nuclear arms race.

South Korea's Bomb Revisited

The first South Korean proliferation decision reveals the complex relationship between U.S. nuclear strategy and the external security environment in relation to South Korean proliferation propensity. This phase in Korean history shows that a period of international relaxation such as is now occurring—as in 1972 when *détente* was under way and North and South Korea began their first talks—does not preclude an effort by Koreans to acquire nuclear weapons. The waters around Korea may look calm, while lakes inland may be seething with undercurrents of turmoil.

Plutonium Program

South Korea began planning to reprocess spent nuclear fuel in 1968. Undoubtedly, these plans were spurred by the U.S. announcement in 1970 that the United States would enrich uranium required for commercial nuclear power plants only for purchasers who recycled plutonium from spent fuel.¹¹ Astoundingly, the United States was linking the security of the nuclear fuel supply to its clients' willingness to generate bomb-grade plutonium from spent fuel. In 1972 South Koreans openly discussed importing reprocessing technology with the French.¹²

In reality, security of nuclear fuel supply was South Korea's secondary

objective in pursuing reprocessing technology. For in 1971 President Park Chung Hee ordered the Weapons Exploitation Committee to explore obtaining nuclear weapons. He took this move in reaction to the Nixon withdrawal of the Seventh Infantry Division from South Korea in early 1971.¹³ Nixon withdrew the division by way of implementing the Guam Doctrine announced in 1968. Under this policy, U.S. allies were told to take primary responsibility for their own defenses, while the United States would offer arms transfers, naval and air support, and a nuclear backstop. That a division was withdrawn from Korea also reflected the beleaguered U.S. position in Vietnam. To South Koreans, of course, troop withdrawal symbolized the reduction of the U.S. commitment and a deteriorating regional environment—even though hundreds of U.S. nuclear weapons and the Second Infantry Division remained in Korea.¹⁴

India's nuclear explosion in 1974 set off alarm bells in Washington. U.S. intelligence analysts were instructed to review information canvassed from embassies about trade in critical nuclear items such as special machine tools, bulk orders of beryllium and boron and exotic explosive chemicals, and shaped charge technology. "When they got to Korea," one of the analysts reportedly said, "everything snapped into place."¹⁵ In March 1975 the U.S. ambassador, Richard Sneider, told his French counterpart, Pierre Landy, that "in effect . . . the United States has no doubts that the Koreans have in mind putting to ulterior military ends what they can make use of, such as plutonium."¹⁶

In March 1975 the United States held hostage U.S. financing for South Korea's second nuclear reactor until South Korea gave up its reprocessing aspirations. "We have heard that your government may be in the process of acquiring a facility for reprocessing spent fuel into plutonium," U.S. Export-Import Bank president William Casey told South Korea's deputy prime minister Nam Duck-woo. "It would be important for you to let us know what your plans are in this respect," he added. "The availability of a reprocessing facility in Korea could be considered to create a potential for nuclear proliferation which could become an impediment to our final approval of this loan."¹⁷

On June 12, the *Washington Post* reported President Park Chung Hee's remarks that South Korea could and would produce nuclear weapons but would refrain so long as the U.S. nuclear umbrella remained over Korea. The same day, Park Chun-kyu, the policy chairman of the ruling party (DRP), stated that South Korea could see no need for nuclear weapons "at present."¹⁸ On June 29, 1975, U.S. Defense Secretary James Schlesinger tried to head off further discussion of South Korea's nuclear option by stating that the U.S. nuclear umbrella covered Korea.¹⁹

Meanwhile, U.S. officials pressured the French, Canadians, and Belgians to pull out of reprocessing deals.²⁰ In 1975 U.S. Secretary of State

Kissinger reportedly killed the French–South Korean reprocessing deal and the weapons program by threatening to cancel the U.S. security commitment to South Korea.²¹ The United States also obtained Park Chung Hee's commitment not to acquire nuclear weapons, symbolized in South Korea's ratification of the Nonproliferation Treaty.

“Archaic” Ballistic Missiles

In spite of Park's reversal, South Korea continued to seek dual-capable and nuclear weapons–related technology. High-level officials continued to play on the U.S. nonproliferation nerve. On October 29, 1976, for example, South Korea's minister of national defense So Chong-chol said, “We have no intention whatever to consider any plan for the development of nuclear weapons of our own.” But he noted darkly that North Korea “has the means of launching nuclear weapons,” although not the warheads themselves.²²

Moreover, other sources indicate that South Korea never dismantled facilities set up to pursue the option in the 1971–76 period but merely “stood them down.”²³ According to a retired senior U.S. official, “They also went after heavy water and other hanky-panky”—at least until 1980.²⁴ This included another end run in November 1978 to obtain reprocessing equipment, this time as part of the deal offered by France to supply two nuclear reactors.²⁵ The United States headed off the threat by pulling out all stops to see that the contracts for units seven and eight were awarded to Westinghouse. But vicious international competition to supply reactors to Korea made it harder to plug holes in the dike each year.

In October 1978 the south prominently paraded modified U.S. Honest John and Nike Hercules missiles. The missiles had been nuclear-armed until they were handed over to South Korea in 1977 as part of the withdrawal policy. *Military Review* noted that these missiles “could also be used as platforms for nuclear warheads.”²⁶ No doubt the message was not lost on Pyongyang—or Washington.

Just to make sure, the same week as the parade, a high-level State Department official concerned with nonproliferation who was visiting Seoul was told by a South Korean general that South Korea would renege on the Nonproliferation Treaty if the United States withdrew its ground troops. This declaration sent a shiver up the spine of the State Department.

“Hanky-panky” also included buying from a U.S. firm the specifications, engineering drawings, instructions, designs, blueprints, and assembly equipment used in the U.S. Atlas Centaur missile program. South Korea

also bought nose cone materials, alloys, and guidance systems, and sought associated computer equipment and software packages for the missile.²⁷

Seoul's acquisition of an "archaic" ballistic missile may have had an innocent explanation. But the idea that South Korea might be able to loft a ballistic missile to Beijing was chilling to the State Department. For the Atlas was the first U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile. First deployed in 1959, it could deliver a W-38 nuclear warhead 5,000 miles with 1-mile accuracy.²⁸

South Korea reportedly continued to develop indigenous missile technology until at least 1980, when the program finally ran out of steam due to its high cost.²⁹

MOX Maneuver

In spite of the U.S. strongarm tactics, South Korea continues to express interest in acquiring reprocessing technology. In 1984, for example, the Canadian Atomic Energy Agency reportedly proposed—and the United States reportedly stopped—South Korean research into recycling of spent fuel from a U.S. light water reactor (LWR) in South Korea into mixed oxide fuel (MOX) that would have contained bomb-grade plutonium for the Canadian heavy water reactor at Wolsung.³⁰ The Canadian reactor produces much more plutonium from its unenriched uranium fuel than an LWR; once extracted and reprocessed from the spent fuel, plutonium can then be recycled into a fuel of mixed uranium oxide and plutonium, or MOX.

Although the Canadians denied that they were transferring sensitive reprocessing technologies, there is no doubt that they were doing just this.³¹ The U.S. Department of Energy says that the United States pressured "Canada to back away from the Canadian proposal to transfer technology in the reprocessing field."³² This move left the South Koreans smarting and resentful at American interference.

Dwindling U.S. Hegemony

Such activities are consistent with South Korea's demonstrated ongoing ambition for nuclear weapons after 1975. Indeed, Park Chung Hee is said to have been interested in the Israelis' military strategy, sending some of his top people to learn more on the spot.³³ He was also reportedly impressed by the model of nuclear deterrence represented by Israel's covert nuclear deterrent force.³⁴

There can be little doubt that South Korea is bent on keeping its nuclear options open. In the next chapter, we shall see that North Korea may have already surpassed the United States as the most important influence on whether South Korea exercises that option.

Proliferation Potential

It is the Northern Puppet [North Korea] that has been mentioned as one of those countries which are capable of manufacturing nuclear weapons.

—South Korean Ministry of Defense,
September 1987¹

In 1981 President Chun Doo Hwan threatened to reduce North Korea “to ashes” if threatened by the north, adding: “We have the means to do it.”²

His statement promptly revived speculation that South Korea has secret nuclear weapons capabilities or aspirations. South Korean leaders still value the option of a homegrown bomb. Privately, they express open doubt about the reliability of U.S. extended deterrence.

Apart from these statements and other disparate indicators noted in the last chapter, there is no hard evidence that South Korea is welching on its 1975 bilateral agreement with the United States to forgo nuclear weapons. South Korea is also committed to the Nonproliferation Treaty, and it allows international agencies to inspect its nuclear facilities. Proliferation would incur considerable international opprobrium for dubious security benefits, especially for a civilian-based regime.

This chapter reviews the multiple layers of constraint on nuclear proliferation by either Korea. There is evidence that a nascent nuclear arms race is already under way in Korea due to the geopolitical insecurity of both Koreas, the demonstration effect of the U.S. Army’s gung ho nuclear warplanning in collaboration with the South Korean military, and the impact of U.S. and South Korean military and nuclear threats on the north.

The chapter concludes that the proliferation barrel of the double-barreled dilemma is loaded with not one, but two charges that may backfire on U.S. nuclear strategy.

International Constraints

Four factors indicate that South Korea’s bomb program is inactive. First, South Korea allows full-scope safeguards on its nuclear facilities—

although they are said to be a little taken aback by the level of inspection, especially for the CANDU.³ Second, South Korea maintains tight security over its domestic nuclear fuel cycle. Third, to date it has not exported any nuclear materials that would contravene the nonproliferation regime.

South Korea, however, is not among the twenty-three countries that have advised the secretary-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency that they will observe the authoritative interpretation of Articles II and III of the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), spelled out in the Zanger "trigger list" of proliferation-intensive commodities.⁴

Fourth, as a nonnuclear weapons state party to the NPT, South Korea is committed by virtue of Article II not to receive, control, or manufacture nuclear weapons or devices, and "not to seek any or receive any assistance in their manufacture."⁵ That South Korea was engaged in a clandestine nuclear weapons program at the very time it was ratifying the NPT, and its subsequent behavior, leave a residual uncertainty as to the depth of this commitment. Indeed, South Korea's delegate to the IAEA General Conference in 1976 called on the IAEA to improve its safeguards system. At the same time, he asserted that "non proliferation of nuclear weapons should not interfere with the peaceful application of nuclear energy."⁶

South Korea has not taken a high profile at the IAEA. Its official delegation did not address the 1985 or 1986 General Conferences.⁷ Nor did it make a statement at the 1985 NPT Review Conference, sending only a Geneva-based South Korean diplomat rather than a full-fledged delegation. South Korea has hosted two IAEA training courses in Seoul, sent its scientists to Vienna, and been active in the IAEA's Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development, and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology.⁸ Such behavior may be consistent with not being recognized as a legitimate state at the United Nations—that is, as a desire to be seen but not heard at the IAEA. Nonetheless, the fact remains that South Korea is not a prominent international exponent of nonproliferation diplomacy.

Finally, the true believers in nuclear power—the South Korean scientists and technologists who steered the program into its prominence today—are generally strong supporters of South Korea's remaining nonnuclear-armed. One told a 1986 IAEA working group meeting in Seoul that to win public acceptance for nuclear power, South Korea ought to keep its "hands clean and keep our nose away from the stink of gunpowder and highly enriched uranium above 90 [percent]."⁹

Bilateral Constraints

The bilateral agreements for technical cooperation and nuclear supply also lock South Korea into nonproliferation commitments. The U.S.–South

Korean agreement, for example, gives the United States intrusive rights of inspection.¹⁰ The Australian-South Korean agreement specifically reserves the Australian government's consent to South Korean reprocessing of nuclear materials derived from Australian uranium.¹¹

The first test of the strength of the bilateral agreements occurred in 1984. South Korea failed to inform the United States about the loss of 24 tons of heavy water at the Wolsung CANDU plant on November 15, 1984. "We were deeply disappointed," said U.S. Ambassador-at-Large Richard Kennedy, "that we were not adequately informed of the accident."¹²

Near-Nuclear Option

There is little doubt, however, that South Korea now has a near-nuclear option. In pursuit of energy independence, South Korea has assembled almost a complete nuclear fuel cycle.¹³ The technological base for its huge nuclear power program also endows South Korea with the ability to produce a relatively crude device. U.S. officials estimate that it could do so within a short time period—that is, between nine months and two years.

The South Koreans would have written off the nuclear option altogether if the trends in the international environment and local military balance were the main indicators. Yet they have continued sporadically to try to gain proliferation-related technologies, suggesting that other motivations may be at work. Similarly, North Korea may have powerful incentives to acquire a nuclear weapons capability due to its perception of the threats it faces.

In the 1970s the constraints and costs of a nuclear program were overshadowed by what South Koreans perceived to be a deteriorating external security environment, reflected in a reduced U.S. military commitment. Made while the United States still maintained a substantial nuclear and conventional force presence, the 1971 proliferation decision suggests that South Korea—and the north, as I argue below—is highly sensitive to perceptions of advantage and disadvantage flowing from the great-power alignments in East Asia.

Having done it once, therefore, South Korea could again reach for the bomb if it perceives a threatening international environment. Ironically, the same reaction could be prompted if North Korea proliferates in alarm at South Korean military capabilities, nuclear collaboration with the U.S. military, and response to a great power environment that superficially works to South Korea's advantage.

Demonstration Effect?

Conservative nationalism and the accumulated demonstration effect of U.S. reliance on nuclear weapons have led many in the South Korean

military to conclude that nuclear weapons are indispensable to the South's defense. The South Koreans' operational integration into U.S. nuclear strategy therefore has important, albeit unrecognized implications for the nuclear proliferation dynamic in South Korea (see chapters 7 and 13).

The nuclear collaboration affects both North and South Korean perceptions of the utility of nuclear weapons. The South Korean military may judge the efficacy of nuclear weapons by what they see, hear, and do, rather than by what they are told by U.S. diplomats. As a former U.S. ambassador admitted,

The [U.S.] military's message is less sophisticated, stronger, and more gung ho than ours [in the State Department]. We could only partly convince Park Chung Hee that they did not represent U.S. policy. The Korean's operational role reinforces that mis-message. The military give a more nuclear defense-prone picture than we should be giving to the South Koreans. The problem is that there will always be gung ho bathroom talk about nuclear weapons at the command level.¹⁴

In the short term, this pronuclear preference is unlikely to overwhelm the inhibiting effect of South Korea's increasingly benign international environment on a nuclear weapons program. Nonetheless, it suggests that South Korean nonproliferation commitments are more fragile than commonly assumed by U.S. decision-makers.

Ostensibly, U.S. nuclear weapons in Korea preclude and inhibit South Korean proliferation. In light of the preceding analysis, however, U.S. nuclear strategy makes a Korean bomb more rather than less likely by virtue of its demonstration effect on South Korea and its impact on North Korean security.

North Korea—Reaching for the Bomb?

North Korea can hardly view even the current level of South Korean integration into nuclear strategy with equanimity. Due to its deteriorating international and domestic military and political position relative to that of South Korea (and its paranoia about U.S. nuclear weapons), North Korea may be highly motivated to obtain its own nuclear weapons or near-nuclear option. In light of its deep conviction that South Korea is an American puppet, the North Korean government views the south's expanding participation in nuclear strategy under the aegis of Combined Forces Command as U.S. conspiracy to give South Korea the bomb. As a senior Pentagon official said recently, "If the North Koreans were doing what the South Koreans are doing, the bells would be going off in Seoul."¹⁵

Thus, it was not surprising that in 1988 the North Koreans broadcast: "Even Nuclear Armament Schemed." On October 12, North Korean radio accused the South Korean military of planning to install nuclear weapons on warships in 1989 and of scheming "even nuclear arms buildup."

The south Korean ruling group openly talks about installation of nuclear weapons at a time when the United States, together with the Japanese reactionaries, is staging test nuclear exercises against our Republic even after the Olympics. This brings into bolder relief their bellicose nature in seeking to ignite nuclear war at any cost on the Korean peninsula."¹⁶

The North Korean construction of an indigenous 30 MW reactor (reportedly modeled after the British Calder Hall Magnox reactor) at Yongbyon north of Pyongyang is therefore of great significance. The reactor has reportedly operated since late 1987, and North Korea now has to decide what to do with the annual output of spent fuel that contains about 7–8 kilograms of weapons grade plutonium.¹⁷

In February 1989 U.S. officials leaked the news that they had detected in satellite photographs a mystery facility on the riverbank opposite the reactor which might be a reprocessing plant.¹⁸ It is now in the cards that North Korea may try to obtain reprocessing technology. It is unknown whether and doubtful that the North Koreans are wise enough to recognize the likely impact of their behavior on South Korea in this sensitive area. While the Soviets would likely not supply the requisite reprocessing technology, the same cannot be said with certainty of the Chinese.¹⁹

When the United States discovered the North Korean reactor in 1980, it pressured the Soviet Union to lean on North Korea to join the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).²⁰ North Korea has long had a couple of Soviet-supplied 1–4 MW(t) research reactors.²¹ International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) "Type 66" safeguards have applied to this reactor and related nuclear materials since 1977, when North Korea made a unilateral submission to the IAEA for safeguards assistance.²² Kim Il Sung reportedly said in March 1976 that "we have no intention of arming ourselves with nuclear weapons. We have not enough money to produce nuclear weapons or an adequate place to test them."²³ North Korea did not finally sign the NPT, however, until December 12, 1984, after the Soviets offered an apparent quid pro quo, a Soviet-supplied 1,760 MWe nuclear power station.²⁴

IAEA Debacle

Some South Korean officials view with great suspicion North Korea's failure to agree to an IAEA technical agreement for the implementation of

safeguards within eighteen months of signing the NPT. In fact, the IAEA committed an enormous bureaucratic blunder when, after wasting three months, it sent in February 1986 the agreement form for a non-NPT signatory to North Korea. The North Koreans requested clarification and were told by IAEA that it was the correct agreement. The IAEA staff only discovered their error when, to their surprise and chagrin, the North Koreans rejected the agreement as transgressing their national sovereignty. Discussions apparently revived in the summer of 1987 when IAEA finally sent the North Koreans the correct agreement.²⁵ The United States complained to the IAEA in February 1989 that North Korea was delaying its submission to full-scope safeguards.²⁶

It would seem imprudent to rely on NPT safeguards to restrain North Korean nuclear proliferation, because safeguards are notoriously subject to covert diversion.²⁷ Moreover, North Korea could bow out of its non-proliferation commitments by simply citing the failure of the NPT to prevent the United States and/or South Korea from projecting nuclear threats against it. (UN Security Council Resolution 255 of March 7, 1968 committed the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union to aid any "victim of an act or an object of a threat of aggression in which nuclear weapons are used" as part of a deal to get nonnuclear states to join the NPT.²⁸) That North Korea has disregarded international opinion in the past suggests that one should not place too much stock in NPT restraints over Pyongyang.

The major constraint on North Korean proliferation is not legal but political. A North Korean nuclear weapon program would destroy its nuclear free zone proposal for Korea and the credibility of Kim Il Sung's 1986 declaration that North Korea would not build a bomb. Should it seek weapons-related technology, therefore, North Korea's likely path will be to strive for technology that is consistent with a policy of studied ambiguity. This stance would preclude South Korean attack on the facility and maintain its anti-nuclear propaganda.

South Korean Reactions

What is clear is that the South Koreans take a dim view of North Korean intentions in this area. They believe that reprocessing cannot be justified on economic grounds for a program of less than ten power plants. As North Korea has yet to start building even one power plant, the South Koreans would conclude that North Korean reprocessing of spent fuel from the research reactor would have military motivations.

Hawkish South Korean officials are already deeply suspicious of North Korea's nuclear weapons intentions. Against this hard-line view is

that of other South Korean officials who note that like France, India, and China, North Korea found the NPT to be discriminatory. They are reassured by the Soviets' role in convincing the North Koreans to ratify the NPT in December 1985. They look gleefully to the day when IAEA inspectors will swarm over North Korea as they do over South Korea. They believe that a North Korean bomb would undermine its security. Whether this liberal view is more widespread in the South Korean state than that of the hard-liners—or as influential in decision making as that locus of political power in South Korea, the army headquarters—is unknown.

Great-Power Restraint

It is doubtful that the United States could contain South Korea from matching or exceeding perceived North Korean moves to gain the bomb. Even if South Korea were to act prudently, leaving countervailing moves to the great powers, a North Korean bomb program would freeze hostility even harder—if that is possible. The biggest danger would be that North Korean proliferation prompts an Israeli-style preemptive southern strike on North Korean nuclear facilities. The mere possibility that the North Koreans are building a reprocessing plant has reportedly already caused consternation in Seoul.²⁹

The north, on the other hand, may be able to exploit latent competition between China and the Soviet Union to increase its freedom of maneuver. If North Korea managed to proliferate in spite of great power opposition, it would ratchet up the risks run by all great powers in Korea, enhancing North Korea's political and military weight. It is possible that North Korean proliferation would result in an indefinite extension of the current standoff at a new plateau of escalation danger.

Of course, if a North Korean bomb enhanced the cohesion of U.S.-South Korean and U.S.-Japanese alliances, or if South Korea responded with its own independent bomb, proliferation could be highly counterproductive to North Korean security. But then, North Korea did not hesitate to pursue earlier counterproductive strategies such as attempts to assassinate South Korean leaders, fostering South Korean revolution, and attacking South Korean and U.S. forces. If U.S. nuclear strategy induces paranoia in Pyongyang, the North Koreans may commit "irrational" deeds to compensate for their perceived weaknesses against their external threat.

The worst outcome would be symmetrical proliferation in Korea, with both Koreas controlling independent nuclear forces. Such a situation would maximize incentives on both sides to preempt the other in a crisis,

facing the great powers with the prospect of a forcibly reunified, nuclear-armed Korea (or a smoking, radiating ruin). Although a reunified Korea could be a security buffer for China, the Soviet Union, and Japan, it could also prompt massive Japanese rearmament and proliferation—although Japan could equally lean more heavily on the United States, as occurred when China proliferated. If South Korea responded to a North Korean bomb by opting for an independent nuclear force rather than by increasing its participation in U.S. nuclear forces, the United States might accept it as the least bad outcome, not least because the proliferators—including North Korea—would be a major headache for the United States' adversary, the Soviet Union. This pragmatic, realpolitik calculus would depend on the precise circumstances. But one should not assume that the United States would frown strongly on an independent South Korean force once it appears as a *fait accompli*.³⁰

Far from reassuring South Korea to avoid South Korean proliferation, therefore, U.S. nuclear strategy may be a powerful stimulus to both south and North Korean nuclear proliferation. As strategist Peter Polomka wrote in 1985,

[The nuclear] option [is not one] which South Korea is likely to rule out, nor one which will necessarily be precluded by the continued presence of US tactical nuclear weapons on South Korean soil. Indeed, such a presence arguably provides an incentive for the North to pursue the nuclear option, which, in turn, would be likely to ensure a South Korean response."³¹

The proliferation dynamic in Korea cannot be reduced to the imperative of reassuring South Korea. Reassuring South Korea has meant alarming the north and gives the north maximum incentive to proliferate. In the future, South Korea may respond to northern moves toward proliferation in ways that the United States is decreasingly able to control. In the long run, "reassurance" provided by the army's warfighting nuclear weapons in Korea will undo nonproliferation strategy and haunt its advocates long after U.S. nuclear weapons have left Korea.

In short, keeping nuclear weapons in Korea to halt nuclear weapons proliferation is like prescribing heroin to a drug addict. Hard drugs kill habitual users and eliminate the supplier's market. In the same way, the tactical nuclear weapons intended to reassure Seoul actually erode the foundations of U.S. nuclear hegemony in Korea and stimulate the nascent nuclear arms race on the peninsula.

15

Disarming Korea

A Military Demarcation Line shall be fixed and both sides shall withdraw two (2) kilometers from this line so as to establish a Demilitarized Zone between the opposing forces. A Demilitarized Zone shall be established as a buffer zone to prevent the occurrence of incidents which might lead to a resumption of hostilities.

—Korean War Armistice Agreement, 1953

The legacy of nearly four decades of the nuclear strategy narrated in parts I and II of this study is that the United States is now impaled on the prongs of multiple, nuclear dilemmas in Korea.

On the one hand, the United States strives to avoid war, including nuclear war, while deterring North Korean aggression. On the other hand, it seeks to reassure its Pacific allies that the nuclear umbrella still exists, and to control South Korean nuclear proliferation and military behavior.

Unfortunately, nuclear threats and nuclear warfighting—the contending practices employed to deter and defend against North Korea—both make it harder to contain nuclear proliferation by demonstrating to Koreans the putative utility and indispensability of nuclear weapons. By fueling an offensive arms race, they also harden the Korean security deadlock, making war, including nuclear war, more rather than less likely. Part III of this study demonstrated that it is all too possible that first use of nuclear weapons in Korea could escalate to general nuclear war among the great powers.

This chapter argues that a new policy direction in Korea is urgently needed, one aimed at reducing tensions and achieving a political settlement, rather than hardening a military standoff. It contends that U.S. policy in Korea cannot be allowed to drift any longer. The status quo in Korea is unlikely to hold for another forty years. If the fuse is lit in Korea and the Pacific powderkeg explodes, no one knows where the pieces might fall.

The chapter suggests that such an approach would combine unilateral U.S. initiatives with multilateral agreements aimed at creating and maintaining Korea as a neutral nation. These actions, it is argued, would provide a context in which Koreans themselves could resolve issues of governance and federation in ways that reduce and resolve rather than expand and deepen their insecurity.

A precipitate withdrawal of U.S. forces, however, could trigger a nuclear arms race between North and South Korea, creating incentives for mutual preemption. In this case, the United States would simply have traded the devil for the deep blue sea.

Consequently, the chapter asserts that it is essential that an overall policy of graduated withdrawal of U.S. forces be developed in Washington. One might expect that the latest thaw in U.S.-Soviet relations might also affect the Korean standoff. In 1972, however, superpower détente was followed by an increase in tension and hostility in Korea. It is by no means certain that the warm ocean of political economy that bathes East Asia will melt the Korean glacier.

The chapter concludes by suggesting that Congress should take a much stronger role in determining U.S. policy toward Korea to bring pressure on the executive to adopt the policy changes described below.

Militarized Diplomacy

Since the Korean War, U.S. policy in Korea has been dominated by military considerations and institutions. As a result, current U.S. policy for Korea hardly recognizes let alone addresses the nuclear issue in Korea.

Under President Reagan, U.S. policy toward Korea was singularly sterile. Due to the Carter debacle, even raising the issue of a settlement in Korea was regarded in the Reagan administration as “political poison” and “instant death” in the State Department.¹ U.S. officials kept aloof from the popular opposition until it fought Chun Doo Hwan’s police to a stalemate in July 1987.² They then immediately embraced his unpopular successor, Roh Tae Woo, who was widely perceived to have stolen the December 1988 election.

The Olympics offered a unique opportunity to strike a new tone in north-south relationships. South Korea, however, saw the Olympics as its chance to establish its political hegemony over all Korea. It therefore stonewalled North Korean demands to co-host the games. Announcing that U.S. aircraft carriers would stand offshore from the Olympics ensured that the games could not become a bridge across the demilitarized zone. Moving away from this kind of militarized diplomacy will take leadership at the highest levels.

Unfortunately, the State Department has no plans to push for a political settlement in which contingent military withdrawal would be used to extract mutual concessions between the Koreas—the demand of opponents of withdrawal in the 1970s. Just the opposite: U.S. officials look to the year 2000 and beyond before U.S. troops will leave Korea.³ Although it has been speculated that the Bush administration will withdraw forces

from Korea, in part to offset the Soviet unilateral cuts in Eastern Europe, the vested interests in keeping forces in Korea are powerful.⁴ Aside from the U.S. Army's parochial concerns, strategic analysts argue that U.S. forces are needed in Korea to support the credibility of the U.S. commitment to Japan and general flexibility in the face of shifting regional great-power relations.⁵

Even worse, U.S. officials openly entertain making the Second Infantry Division a Korean-based light infantry rapid-deployment force for use outside Korea—a favorite hobby horse of former CINCPAC and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. William Crowe.⁶ U.S. Forces Korea has also studied pulling forces out of Korea (probably to Japan) in a global war starting in Europe leaving behind a minimal force in “austere” conditions.⁷ Such a reorientation would embroil South Korea into U.S. regional conflicts far afield from its primary concern, North Korea. It would also motivate the Soviet Union to deepen its relationship with North Korea. For its part, North Korea might use the shift to justify a nuclear bomb program of its own.

Diplomatic Doldrums

Under Reagan, the United States has ignored or deflected all North Korean diplomatic overtures since 1980. As a result, the United States has failed to capitalize on the North Koreans' acceptance of South Korea's independent existence, even if not the legitimacy of its leadership.⁸

Perhaps the saddest example of a missed opportunity during the Reagan administration was its reaction to North Korea's June 1986 proposal for three-way talks at the Military Armistice Commission. This initiative contained major concessions to the United States and South Korea.⁹ Most important, the North Koreans suggested that the United States bring South Korea to the negotiating table on the basis of full equality, thereby meeting a long-standing U.S. demand.

“We pissed all over that,” said a disgusted American diplomat.¹⁰ Upon receipt of the letter, the U.S. commander in Korea, Gen. William Livsey, rejected the North Koreans' proposal on the formalistic grounds that the wrong North Korean had signed it. (The North Korean minister of defense instead of the North Korean signatory to the 1953 armistice, Kim Il Sung, had signed it.)

At the time, senior South Korean military advisers recommended that South Korea accept the proposal and were distressed at its summary rejection. “We told the North Koreans,” said one high-level U.S. diplomat later, “if you have any ideas, bring them up in the MAC. When they did, we said that the South isn't in the MAC!”¹¹ The U.S. rejection, he added,

“convinced them that we are as unscrupulous as we find them.” Obviously, militarized diplomacy will not arrest deterioration of the security dilemma toward deadlock.

In 1987 the United States embarked on a widely publicized move to communicate via China willingness to discuss contentious issues with North Korea. The American proposal to North Korea, however, did not break any new ground. Instead, it simply reiterated suggestions made previously at the military armistice commission. Rather than reducing the scale and frequency of the annual Team Spirit exercises, for example, the United States merely invited North Korea to exchange observers at exercises—an old proposal. Commenting on this initiative, one U.S. intelligence analyst said: “We increase the size of the exercise each year and then invite the North Koreans to observe it. It’s insulting. It degrades rather than improves the political climate.”

The United States also ignored the June 1987 North Korean call for mutual troop reductions that North Korea states it has begun to implement unilaterally by demobilizing one hundred thousand soldiers by the end of 1987.¹² South Korea’s reaction was also predictably negative, in line with their rebuff to an earlier call for talks by North Korea in March 1987.¹³ American officials also dismissed the North Korean proposal as a propaganda ploy.¹⁴

These episodes illustrate the general problem of only talking to the North Koreans through the military-run military armistice commission. This arrangement virtually ensures that so long as the South Korean military are in power or retain veto power in Seoul, the American military commander in Korea will have more sway in Seoul than the U.S. ambassador, especially in crises. Inside information from the U.S. command often allows the South Korean military to take a hard line publicly against North Korea, preempting U.S. diplomatic options. This arrangement enables the South Korean military tail to wag the U.S. diplomatic dog. It is inconceivable that the military will ever negotiate peace at Panmunjon, a site frozen in time and choreographed for war, where the only language spoken—and understood—is violence.

Relying on a U.S. general to represent U.S. diplomatic interests through the Military Armistice Commission is particularly unwise. As one cynic at the State Department said, “We send a four-star general to Korea, and in few weeks he has slant eyes.”¹⁵

Put in less baldly racist terms, it is unrealistic to expect the U.S. military to elevate American political over military interests. The South Korean military is also adept at manipulating American perceptions and responses, including, where possible, playing off the U.S. commander in chief against the embassy.

Far from seeking arms control and disarmament in Korea, the United States has aided and abetted South Korea's rapid military buildup, which may soon catapult South Korea into unambiguous offensive superiority over North Korea.¹⁶ The United States has also pushed South Korea to support actively a regional anti-Soviet coalition. This policy encourages South Koreans to play in the regional big-power game, and to acquire more powerful weapons, especially naval forces.

If realized, all these trends would push North Korea even closer to the Soviet Union. The Soviets would likely be receptive to North Korean overtures, as they have few other cards to play in the Pacific. Depending on the future of Sino-Soviet relations, these trends might even prompt the Soviets to place military forces in North Korea, in addition to the current Soviet use of North Korean airfields and ports. Such a development would increase the risk of superpower confrontation over Korea, even if the Soviets' deepening involvement made everyone more cautious about starting another Korean war. The level of north-south vituperative hostility would increase, and with it the risk of inadvertent war along the demilitarized zone.

Melting the Glacier

The thaw in the second cold war symbolized by the INF agreement has not reduced military hostility in Korea. The changing geopolitical environment, combined with the shift toward South Korean military superiority (in addition to its growing economic lead) over North Korea also threatens to rekindle the fires of nuclear proliferation. Policies that do not moderate or reverse these trends will increase the interrelated risks of war and nuclear proliferation in Korea.

Is there a way out of the hall of mirrors that guides U.S. policy? The following proposals are necessary ingredients of an alternative policy package. What matters is not the sequence in which the steps are taken, but that the elements of the dilemma are dealt with in a comprehensive manner.

1. Denuclearize Korea

Whether the U.S. or the South Korean military like it or not, the nuclear cat is out of the bag in South Korean politics and cannot be stuffed back in. Nuclear weapons not only pollute the atmosphere in north-south dialogue and destabilize the military standoff, but now engender active opposition to the U.S. nuclear presence. Even from a narrow political

perspective, it is time for the United States to trade the dubious deterrence benefits of nuclear weapons in Korea for more substantial security benefits.

Moreover, if the order came from high enough on the U.S. side, there would be little active opposition from the army to withdrawing nuclear weapons from Korea, whatever their private reservations. Indeed, retired Lt. Gen. John Cushman, former commander of the vital I Corps in the western sector of the DMZ between 1976 and 1978, called in 1988 for the United States to dispense with the nuclear issue in Korea. He declared flatly that "nuclear weapons are no longer necessary for the defense of [South] Korea."¹⁷ In 1977 Nathan White pointed out to the Pentagon that nuclear weapons in Korea were particularly worrisome to the North Koreans and could represent substantial bargaining power.¹⁸

The United States should take two initiatives to reduce the nuclear risks and stabilize the military standoff.

No First Use. The United States should resurrect an old proposal (first raised in the Pentagon in 1972) to adopt a no first use (NFU) agreement with China and the Soviet Union in Korea.¹⁹ This NFU agreement should be pursued irrespective of South Korea's stance, although consultations with Seoul should precede the move. A unilateral NFU agreement would be shock treatment that would alert the South Korean government that the north-south dialogue must move from relatively insignificant economic issues to substantive security dilemmas.

China and the Soviet Union share an overriding interest in reducing great power tensions in the Far East. Both would probably respond positively to bilateral U.S. overtures to issue NFU declarations. An NFU agreement should be pursued first as a prelude to and then in tandem with the following proposal for a nuclear-free zone.

Nuclear-Free Zone. The South Koreans should be encouraged to start negotiations with the North Koreans over declaring a nuclear-free zone (NFZ) as a corollary to the NFU negotiations between the great powers and to solidify both Koreas' commitments to nuclear nonproliferation.

As an NFZ would entail U.S. concessions that could not be matched in kind by the Soviet Union or China (neither state having nuclear weapons in North Korea), a North-South Korean agreement is the appropriate format for an NFZ.

An NFZ should be proposed in return for substantial North Korean political and military concessions, especially reductions in offensive forces. As the South Korean military is institutionally antagonistic to arms control for self-serving reasons (its own power base from which to dominate

civil society), the United States should cultivate countervailing constituencies for arms control and an NFZ in South Korea.

This task may be less difficult than it appears, as the unexpurgated version of an NFZ study conducted by the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs in early 1987 recommended that South Korea call North Korea's nuclear bluff.

By the same token, the United States needs to educate North Korea about what it can expect to constitute an NFZ. North Korea has not admitted in principle that it will accept a phased withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Korea rather than demanding their immediate withdrawal—although the dates suggested by Pyongyang are unrealistic. It also seems open to the prospect that U.S. ground troops would stay on after nuclear weapons have been withdrawn.²⁰ But North Korea still insists on politically unacceptable conditions for monitoring compliance with such steps. On occasion, it has also suggested that a Korean NFZ should cover international ocean and airspace that North Korea has declared to be a security zone, terms that it cannot expect Washington to accept.

U.S. NFU negotiations with the great powers should be closely coordinated with the South Korean NFZ negotiations with North Korea, to ensure that the Soviet Union and China apply maximum pressure to North Korea to perform in accordance with its antinuclear rhetoric. In particular, South Korea should resist North Korea's proposal to create a special tripartite forum to discuss the NFZ in which they could portray South Korea as a U.S. nuclear puppet—a formula that would doom an NFZ to failure. The United States should also consult in advance with Japan and other Pacific nations so that they are not surprised by U.S. diplomacy. A Korean NFZ agreement could provide protocols for great-power accession, and thereby a format for endorsement of an arms control process aimed at defusing tensions in Korea and the region as a whole.

Should the South Koreans refuse to negotiate an NFZ in good faith with North Korea, or should North Korea prove unwilling to make political and military concessions, the United States should nonetheless immediately and unconditionally withdraw its nuclear weapons from South Korea. This move must be made before operational control of the South Korean military is handed back to Seoul, and before the nuclear proliferation gets out of hand again. These imperatives give the United States not much more than a couple of years of grace.

If required, this move should be undertaken regardless of whether civilians or the military are in command in Seoul. While obtaining a substantial quid pro quo from North Korea in return for nuclear with-

drawal is important, it is imperative to remove nuclear targets from the reach of the North or South Korean military.

Most urgent of all is to withdraw nuclear artillery, gravity nuclear bombs, Lance missiles, and any remaining atomic demolition munitions. This withdrawal would remove a major incentive for North Korea to launch a preemptive attack across the demilitarized zone. The removal would also dismantle the de facto integration of U.S. nuclear units with South Korean forces, thereby reversing the demonstration effect on South Korea's military of keeping nuclear weapons in Korea.

At least the nuclear withdrawal would indicate to South Korea that nuclear weapons are unnecessary for its defense. If, as may be the case, North Korea maintains a destabilizing offensive deterrent to counter what it sees as a threat of invasion and offshore nuclear attack, removal of nuclear weapons from Korea—a potent symbol of intent—would remove one major source of distrust.

2. *Democratization*

The most urgent step is to strengthen *legitimate* civilian rule in South Korea. Roh Tae Woo may represent a stepping stone in that direction, but he remains fundamentally a prisoner of the hard-line old guard and the young Turks in the South Korean Army.

The conservative-elite and the student-labor opposition adhere to very different political visions of democracy in South Korea.²¹ How democratic a civilian regime should be is a matter for these contending forces to work out, not Washington. But subordinating the military to civilian rule is the minimum political change necessary to disarm the nuclear dilemma in Korea. Because of its institutional integration with the South Korean military, the United States is unavoidably involved in the South Korean military's role in politics.

There are two reasons to adopt democratization as the driving principle behind U.S. policy on Korea. As noted earlier, the new president, Roh Tae Woo, is not a democrat in military disguise. He is a general wearing a civilian suit stained with the blood of citizens killed at Kwangju in 1980. It is doubtful that Roh will ever gain widespread legitimacy among South Koreans.

Second, if the United States cleaves to a military-dominated regime and ignores the democratic opposition, its own policy may backfire, creating a political and military crisis. This outcome is exactly the situation that those who adhere to the worst case interpretation of North Korea's offensive intentions should most want to avoid.

Third, democratization is crucial to achieving breakthroughs in north-south dialogue. The South Korean military is too wedded to a violently

anti-Communist worldview and too corrupted by the privileges that attend absolute power to support a *nordpolitik*, no matter who sponsors it.

Moreover, the United States could expect that a truly civilian government in Seoul would have a political incentive to negotiate with the north. A civilian government would seek to gain popular legitimacy against the politically ambitious military. Productive talks with North Korea are likely to be easier to achieve than the other potential source of political legitimacy, rapidly increasing real incomes at a time when the labor movement is demanding an increased share of economic growth. Real breakthroughs with the north could also reduce the military threat, allowing the siege mentality to subside and military resources to revert to the civilian economy.

The benefits of civilian supremacy over the South Korean military should be obvious. It would make it more difficult for North Korea to attack the South Korean state as the illegitimate puppet of the United States. The United States should therefore announce that once civilian supremacy is firmly established, it will return operational control over the South Korean military to South Korea. Handing over operational control would strengthen the legitimacy of civilian rule in the eyes of both south and North Koreans. It would obviously reinforce the political subordination of the military to civilians, allowing civilian diplomacy to be elevated above military force in South Korean policy toward North Korea. Enabling the civilians to link softening their stance toward the north with retrieval of full sovereign command over South Korea's military affairs would place the military, who might otherwise oppose a *nordpolitik*, in the untenable position of appearing to block an important nationalist achievement—a status that many in the military aspire to in any case.

U.S. influence over the South Korean military should not be overstated. It is not the United States that will dismantle the military's social and political control apparatus embodied in intelligence agencies such as the Defense Security Command (KCIA). South Koreans themselves will have to demilitarize their political and economic institutions, and clear away the thicket of legal obstacles to political democracy that Roh Tae Woo has kept in place.

Yet the United States is far from impotent to affect the situation, in spite of the pessimism of most U.S. officials as to their ability to influence the internal politics of South Korea.²² As Korean political scientist Choi Jang Jip observed, the United States exercises an enormous influence over the South Korean military, often by default:

The American influence does not necessarily take a positive form, such as a specific action or intervention in the local political situation; non-action equivalent to a negative or implicit endorsement of action initiators may

exert influence on the course of political change, because this implied that certain political actions taken by local political actors do not significantly impinge upon or contradict American interests.²³

The issue, therefore, is not what immediate, marginal effects the United States has on liberalization or democratization in the next political crisis in South Korea. Rather, the United States conditions the whole political agenda by virtue of its attitude toward North Korea.

Certainly the United States should use all the levers at its disposal to minimize the costs of succession and democratization, including orchestrating diplomatic pressure from its allies, exercising its military operational control, exploiting the technological dependence of the South Korean military on the United States and, if necessary, pushing for strong, multilateral economic sanctions. But Washington's real power in Seoul lies in how it handles relations with North Korea.

3. *Recognition of North Korea*

Recasting the political agenda in South Korea demands U.S. diplomatic recognition of North Korea. Coaxing North Korea out of its isolation is the key to reducing military threats along the demilitarized zone, and to reducing the risk of inadvertent war and nuclear proliferation in Korea. A diplomatic push to achieve a breakthrough in north-south relations is the corollary of the great power steps toward denuclearizing Korea.

Until March 1987 U.S. diplomats were not even allowed to talk with North Korean counterparts at unofficial settings. Up until then, they had to follow the childish practice of snubbing North Koreans—a cardinal sin for a realistic diplomacy, no matter how deeply felt the enmity.²⁴ Establishing diplomatic relations with the north—as Henry Kissinger was preparing to do before he left office—would make it absolutely clear that the United States intends to break the security deadlock in Korea. It would bring enormous political pressure on the South Korean military to cooperate with civilian democratic nationalists committed to seeking a peace treaty on advantageous terms.

Making nuclear threats will never help Americans find out how the north thinks about its security situation. The only way to ascertain whether a breakthrough is possible in Korea is to test the water of North Korean intentions. Until this occurs, the United States will simply not know whether the North Korean force posture is designed for a direct or indirect attack on South Korea, or as an offensive deterrent against southern attack on North Korea. Establishing diplomatic relations is necessary to explore areas of potential cooperation. Diplomatic communications would be a precursor to the following steps, which would break the

security deadlock. If necessary, the United States should unilaterally take these initiatives, in varying combinations as best meet the negotiating needs to achieve the steps outlined earlier.

4. Troop Withdrawal, Force Reduction, and Arms Control

Withdrawing nuclear weapons, pursuing democracy in the south, and recognizing North Korea might create enough confidence to allow substantive arms control and force reduction measures to be imposed on both Koreas. Apart from nuclear weapons, U.S. forces in Korea consist of ground, air, and naval forces, supplemented by military aid. These elements can be adjusted in various combinations and sequences to induce North and South Korea in turn to trade off their asymmetric offensive forces.

Reduce Provocative Exercises. An important unilateral step would be for the United States to reduce greatly the scale of the Team Spirit exercise—which, in 1987, involved over 250,000 U.S. and South Korean troops—and make it biannual. To ensure that such a move defuses tension on both sides, the United States should announce its intention to halt the exercise altogether as long as North Korea desists from similar exercises. Indeed, North Korea called for a moratorium on such exercises in February 1987. Since the United States and South Korea have complained about North Korea's conducting exercises near the demilitarized zone without warning, both sides could expect to gain from such a moratorium.

Reinstate Arms Transfer Restraints. The United States should also immediately reinstate the tacit great-power restraint on arms transfers to both Koreas—an arrangement that the United States unilaterally abandoned when F-16s were supplied to the south.

Initiate Contingent Troop Withdrawal. The United States could initiate a north-south force reduction process by announcing that it will withdraw its own troops from South Korea when serious arms control talks begin. These talks would aim to re-demilitarize the demilitarized zone and relocate away from the demilitarized zone forward-deployed offensive forces such as air-mobile commandos.

Neutral Peacekeeping Force. As an intermediate step, the United States could relocate the Second Infantry Division south of Seoul as a sign of good faith, and relinquish the UN Command to a peacekeeping force of truly neutral nations. The UN Command contravenes every basic principle

of international peacekeeping, which requires that mediating forces (1) be composed of units from neutral states; (2) be interposed with the consent of both conflicting parties; (3) symbolize to the antagonists a balanced participation of interested parties; (4) contribute to peacemaking as well as to peacekeeping between conflicting states; (5) be lightly armed and able to move freely; and (6) have unqualified support from its sponsoring body.²⁵

A true peacekeeping force could be based on the existing Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, or on a new organization. Further progress would depend on all parties permitting this peacekeeping force to monitor arms control measures independently and thoroughly, and to investigate transgressions at will. Sophisticated electronic, photographic, and acoustic surveillance technology already used for this purpose in the Sinai is available to support such a force.²⁶ Indeed, the army is currently installing just such a monitoring system in Korea, although it is aimed at automating the battlefield rather than supporting arms control.²⁷ As the United States is unlikely to permit international inspection of its nuclear forces, nuclear withdrawal is a fundamental precondition for effective arms control verification in Korea.

Mutual Force Reductions. Achieving a real settlement, however, would rest on avoiding the temptation to increase rather than dismantle both Koreas' existing offensive forces and to preclude the acquisition of new ones such as mobile air defenses. Moreover, simple force reductions to smaller forces as pushed by North Korea could increase instability by making clandestine movements and "breakout" easier. Forces should be reshaped as they are reduced so that the ratio of defensive to offensive strength is increased. As one Korea's offensive strength is reduced, the other's need for defensive strength goes down in a virtuous circle. In this fashion, instability as well as the absolute potential for violence should visibly diminish. Actual U.S. troop withdrawal would be phased with these mutual force reductions, avoiding the prospect of a precipitate U.S. withdrawal, which worries South Koreans so much. Since 1988 North Korea seems to have admitted this approach is inevitable.

Regional Arms Control. An often heard—and correct—criticism of the Carter withdrawal policy was that it ignored the need to strike a political and military settlement in Korea before disengaging. The same applies to the regional context. The United States should therefore take care to initiate regional arms talks on a bi- and multilateral basis. The immediate goal would be to institute restraint on arms transfers to both Koreas. The overall goal would be to address the urgent need for nuclear and naval arms control and disarmament for the whole North Pacific region.

This latter task is beyond the scope of this study—although Korea is a substantial part of the regional problem.²⁸ But failure to reverse the regional arms buildup will make it much more difficult to achieve the political will needed to bring the parties to the table in Korea. A crucial goal of regional arms talks could be to obtain great-power guarantees of the independence and security of both Koreas.

Under Gorbachev, however, the Soviets have yet to show any inclination to extend their “zone of peace” idea for the Pacific to Korea. Despite its public rhetoric, the Soviet Union may not even favor a nuclear-free zone in Northeast Asia (including Korea) because such a zone might extend to its own territory and would affect its overriding interests in Europe.²⁹

Unless the Soviet Union is given an incentive to trade off its strong position in North Korea for a reduced threat to its own security, it may elect to spoil efforts to settle the Korean standoff.

5. Neutrality and a New Order in Korea

The solution to the security dilemma in Korea rests ultimately on the construction of a new political order in Korea. Rather than a reinforcing the division of Korea into a hostile stalemate, U.S. policy should aim to soften the edges on both sides, allowing Koreans to seek peaceful co-existence, confederation, and eventual reunification on their own terms.

After forty years of division, it is unrealistic to expect rapid progress toward reunification. It is equally unrealistic to expect that the only possible outcome of softening the standoff is for one Korea to swallow the other.³⁰ Koreans of both north and south and of all political stripes have proclaimed their desire to remain one nation, and proposals for transitional steps toward north-south cooperation and confederation abound on both sides.

The north-south talks that began in February 1988 indicate that the two Koreas may be ready finally to accommodate each other. Indeed, South Korea's burgeoning trade and political contact with China and the Soviet Union make the peninsula look more and more like a cold war iceberg melting in the incoming political-economic tide of warm water.

In Pyongyang, however, these developments have hardly reduced the level of southern, combined U.S.–South Korean, conventional/nuclear military threat. If anything, the increased isolation of North Korea has increased Pyongyang's threat perceptions. Reagan's outgoing message to the North was that U.S. troops are in South Korea to stay as long as the North does not capitulate to the “German solution.” As U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Gaston Sigur, said on October 20, 1988, “There is no intention of any kind of change in our

policy of maintaining our forces, our ground forces, in Korea."³¹ In early 1989 U.S. troops in Korea reached 44,000. A year later, U.S. officials were still only talking about token reductions in U.S. troop levels in South Korea totalling 5,000. U.S. troop levels will return to the same level as in 1980 when these withdrawals are completed.³²

Pyongyang has little incentive to negotiate seriously when all that the international status quo offers in return is repayment of overdue debt and military insecurity.³³ The surface of the Korean iceberg may be melting on the southern end, but it remains rock hard on the north. The first casualty of the ongoing military hostility was the north-south parliamentary talks, canceled on February 8, 1989, by Pyongyang in protest against the imminent Team Spirit exercise. In short, maintaining the nuclear threat injects a lethal element into north-south negotiations on political and economic interaction which would lay the basis for reducing military tension.

The lure of economic gain to Pyongyang should not be overestimated, and the poisoning effect of nuclear threats should not be overlooked. The military dimension of the Korean conflict cannot be corroded simply by applying political-economic acid to the external great-power security framework. The great powers must grapple with the security issues, or there will be no fundamental change in the Korean impasse.

Of course, Koreans must determine the internal political structure of Korea. Equally, the great powers, including China, the Soviet Union, the United States, and Japan, must mutually agree upon and guarantee the neutrality of Korea's international status. Korea has been too deeply implicated in great-power politics for the past forty years for anyone to expect that peace can be maintained while it is aligned. Rather, Korea must be established as a neutral country, its neutrality and security guaranteed by the great powers.

The last time the great powers met to discuss the peaceful reunification of Korea was at the 1954 Geneva Conference. There both sides took rigid positions that precluded compromise, making inevitable a political stalemate.³⁴ It would be best to seek to coordinate great-power positions by flexible, diplomatic consultation rather than by a public conference that could again fail to find common ground in Korea.

Conclusion

Solving the nuclear dilemma in Korea, in short, requires a fundamental reorientation of U.S. policy in Northeast Asia. With pragmatists at the helm of all three great military powers, there is an opening for such a shift.

Taking the steps outlined above would mean that the United States could no longer use nuclear warfighting or threats to deter or to compel North Korea. Implementing the policies would also require a degree of policy calibration and political fine-tuning on the part of the U.S. national security apparatus which is beyond its ability. The State Department has periodically opened informal lines of communication with Pyongyang, most recently in November 1988. Unfortunately, forty years of U.S. policy in Korea suggest that the U.S. foreign policy establishment cannot achieve this kind of unity except in wartime.³⁵

There is little evidence that the Bush administration will depart far from "business as usual" to seek a diplomatic settlement in Korea. And if the Carter debacle showed anything, it was that a policy that had less than presidential commitment to substance and detail of implementation is likely to be wrecked on the reefs of interests that have grown out of forty years of containment policy in East Asia.

Of course, President George Bush *could* overrule the bureaucracy. His appointments in Seoul and Beijing have been professional diplomats with intelligence backgrounds who are attuned to the broader issues at stake in Korea. But even if Bush were to push hard—and there is little reason to think that he will—he would need to obtain bipartisan support in Congress.

It is therefore urgent for Congress to make its mark on Korea policy. Congress could begin by investigating the U.S. Army's nuclear collaboration with the South Korean military as well as by delving into the nuclear doctrine and strategy implemented by U.S. Forces Korea. Short of a war, however, there is little reason to think that Congress will take other than an expedient position on the army's organizational interest in Korea. As the next two chapters suggest, the primary burden for changing U.S. policy in Korea rests on the shoulders of the Korean people.

Cracked Consensus

Don't be deceived by the Soviets,
Don't count on the Americans,
The Japanese will soon rise again,
So, Koreans, look out for yourselves!
—Popular Korean saying, 1945¹

For three decades, the United States has kept nuclear weapons in Korea for the multiple and sometimes conflicting goals of deterrence, compellence, and reassurance. Part I noted that striving for reassurance of allies by deploying nuclear weapons could unleash contradictory political forces, especially in Japan where it evoked enormous domestic opposition to nuclear strategy.

A related theme in part I was the linkage between stationing nuclear weapons in Korea and their eviction from first Japan and later Okinawa. This regional dimension of U.S. nuclear strategy in Korea allowed the army to activate the State Department and Congress in its defense when its interests in Korea were threatened by withdrawal.

The willingness of the South Korean regime to forgo and supplant U.S. nuclear reassurance with a nuclear deterrent of its own in the 1970s should have warned the United States that provision of nuclear reassurance might not even achieve its own narrowly defined goal of nonproliferation, let alone deal with its difficult relationship with Japan.

The Achilles' heel of the reassurance strategy, however, was always the superficial popular legitimacy of nuclear strategy in South Korea itself. Long suppressed, the nuclear issue has now erupted onto the South Korean domestic and North–South Korean political agendas.

This chapter reviews the justifications used to legitimate nuclear strategy in Korea. It examines the mushrooming opposition to nuclear weapons across the political spectrum in South Korea. It examines the possible impact of this development on north-south and U.S.–South Korean relations. It concludes that the nuclear issue is so potent in South Korea that it could force the United States to withdraw its nuclear forces despite the U.S. Army's entrenched interest in the nuclear status quo.

Repression and Rationale

Since nuclear weapons were deployed in Korea, the U.S. and South Korean governments have used secrecy and political repression to avoid a public debate about nuclear strategy. As a result, the only public justification for nuclear weapons in South Korea has been hard-line anti-Communism. Apart from extreme anti-Communism, the nuclear weapons are almost bereft of political or military rationale.

Until 1987 the only cracks in the wall of secrecy were local reactions to stories in the Japanese or U.S. media. When they responded at all to overseas news about nuclear weapons in Japan, South Korea's mostly government-controlled press followed the government line to the point of twisting the truth.

A revealing example was the editorial treatment of Gen. Edward Meyer's 1983 statement that tactical nuclear weapons might be used in Korea. One paper told its readers that they should be encouraged by Meyer's resolve as it would make the North Koreans pause before attacking. It was reassured, it said, because the neutron bomb that might be used would kill people rather than destroying property. Koreans, it concluded, have nothing to worry about from nuclear war!²

In general, the military preferred to let sleeping dogs lie rather than actively promote the nuclear strategy. They relied on simple anti-Communism to secure what broad public support exists for the nuclear strategy. No effort was made to develop an operational doctrine that might win the support of elite oppositionists, let alone that of the general public. Politically, the nuclear strategy rested on fragile ideological foundations that crumbled as the South Korean democratic movement mobilized against military rule.

Emergence of Nuclear Opposition

Even today, it is taboo and treasonable to talk about military matters in South Korea. During the late 1970s, the nuclear issue was the province of religious and dissident social movements that were willing to suffer the consequences of ignoring the stringent controls. Often environmental groups approached the nuclear weapons issue indirectly by tackling South Korea's nuclear energy program.

Early in 1985, however, students struggling to topple the military government began to develop explicit antiwar and antinuclear themes as part of their anti-American struggle.³ By 1987 antinuclear slogans had become a major ideological weapon against the government.

At one campus rally held in August 1987, for example, students

depicted South Korea as “colonial” because the United States denies it basic information about nuclear weapons in Korea. They asserted that U.S. command over the South Korean military made it possible for nuclear weapons to be present and demanded reversion of command to the South Korean state. They called for the removal of nuclear weapons and for a peace treaty with North Korea.⁴

But South Korean activists outside the student movement appraised the results from the student campaign as very limited. “The public,” wrote one activist, “has come to regard nuclear weapons as something that guarantees their existence.”⁵ How, they asked, could this be?

Anti-Communist ideology and the “thick wall of information control” were the obvious answers. The only antidote, they argued, was to tell the truth: “Who has introduced nuclear weapons into our country and how, and who has profited from this—these are the most important questions to be raised in the anti-nuclear movement.”⁶

These oppositionists blamed the state-controlled mass media for public apathy about the nuclear issue: the South Korean press censored itself to follow the government’s pronuclear line. They were incensed by a slavish editorial in 1985 that claimed that “the Republic of Korea has been able to exist thanks to the nuclear superiority of the United States and the U.S. nuclear umbrella.”⁷ They accused the South Korean media of blindly accepting the predominance of the United States nuclear strategy over the “will and power of decision of the Korean people.”⁸

“The nuclear policy of South Korea’s ruling circles,” they asserted, “is a carbon copy of that of the United States, and it is not at all difficult to demonstrate a correlation between South Korean press opinion and the official policies of the two countries.”⁹

Added to the press controls was the outright repression and intimidation of nuclear critics by the South Korean national security apparatus. Church activists were regularly harassed by intelligence agencies. Public opposition was condemned as “disorderly” or supporting North Korea. Activists saw the yellow journalism and the political repression as the underside of the U.S. neither-confirm-nor-deny policy.¹⁰

Onto the Political Agenda

Despite all the obstacles, a vibrant antinuclear movement burst through the limits imposed by years of military rule. After the June uprising in 1987, many new centers of opposition emerged. During the presidential electoral campaigns in September 1987, the opposition Party for Unification and Democracy declared that it would seek denuclearization of the Korean peninsula on the basis of north-south coexistence.

The proposal was fairly tame, being contingent upon Seoul's obtaining a nonaggression agreement with Pyongyang and upon the United States' returning control of the South Korean military.¹¹ Nevertheless, the U.S. National Security Council's Gaston Sigur felt obliged to attack this policy preemptively when he stated in Seoul on September 15, 1987, that the United States opposed *any* nuclear-free zone in the Pacific. For good measure, he added that the United States would neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons and opposed any restrictions on U.S. nuclear operations.¹²

On September 25, the opposition parties turned up the antinuclear heat in the National Assembly. In reply, Defense Minister Chong Ho Yong said that denuclearization was unrealistic. "If we say there are no nuclear weapons in South Korea," he explained, "the north will call for denuclearization. We are afraid that various kinds of problems will be caused. Therefore, we cannot say that there are nuclear weapons in South Korea even if there are nuclear weapons, nor can we say there are no nuclear weapons even if there are none."¹³

Perhaps the most remarkable expression of opposition occurred in September 1987 when a group of citizen organizations wrote an open letter to the South Korean military. How many nuclear weapons are in Korea, they asked. Don't nuclear weapons in Korea increase the risk of nuclear war, which thousands of Koreans have already seen at Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Isn't control wholly in the hands of the Americans? That the ministry felt obliged to send a lame reply is a remarkable testament to the ideological potency of this issue in Korea.¹⁴

Antinuclear demands escalated in 1988. In February the South Korean National Council of Churches called for all nuclear weapons to be withdrawn.¹⁵ In March a South Korean chapter of the International Federation of Physicians Against Nuclear War was formed in Seoul and promptly announced that it wanted the federation to establish a chapter in Pyongyang—a statement that would have landed the leaders in jail a year before.¹⁶ In October, the National Council of Churches decided to launch a national and international education campaign on disarmament and nuclear issues in Korea.

Antinuclearism and Anti-Americanism

Antinuclearism and anti-Americanism are now prominent themes of the democratic popular movement in South Korea. The depth of the burgeoning anti-American sentiment is symbolized by the fact that President George Bush had to limit his February 1989 visit to Seoul to four and a half hours and to travel by helicopter to avoid the rocks and Molotov cocktails that Korean demonstrators planned to throw at him. This inci-

dent recalled the protests in Japan that led to the cancellation of President Eisenhower's visit to Tokyo in 1960 and to the eviction of U.S. ground-based nuclear weapons from Japan.

In January 1989 oppositionists formed a new national movement modeled on the left-wing National Democratic Front in the Philippines. The new federation (known in Hangul as the *Chongo Minjok Minju Undong Yanhap*, or National Alliance of National Democratic Movements) is controlled by the worker and peasant farming sectors, and includes other dissident and church oppositionists. At the forefront of its political agenda is the issue of reunification of the Korean nation.

This group set out to recast the north-south conflict in nationalist terms. "If North or South Korea conquers the other," says one activist, "can we really say anyone won? What a war really means is that the nation as a whole would be defeated."¹⁷ The federation also organized the first protests ever against the Team Spirit exercise in 1989, calling it an offensive war game. Thus, the antinuclear slogan has been integrated into a broader set of demands for reunification, democratization, and the eviction of the U.S. military from South Korea.

The future therefore portends increasing challenges to the public legitimacy of nuclear alliance in South Korea, with the nuclear issue a prominent theme of opposition to the government.

Even within conservative circles, the political debate opened by the students has had an effect. Whereas in 1985 it would have been unimaginable for the right-wing middle-class opposition party headed by Kim Young Sam to attack the government over nuclear weapons in Korea, in February 1989 his party was preparing to launch a campaign aimed at evicting the weapons from Korea.

Similarly, virtually every church and popular opposition group now includes an antinuclear plank in its program, usually in tandem with a call for the withdrawal of U.S. troops. Even within conservative military circles, defense intellectuals have begun to debate the military utility of a nuclear warfighting strategy. In November 1988, for example, Lee Hyock Sup of the Korean Military Academy argued that being unusable, nuclear weapons were not a deterrent and were in any case superfluous to a strong conventional deterrent.¹⁸ As retired South Korean general Park Nam-pyo told a recent conference, nuking north Korea would mean nuking one's own relatives—an intolerable situation.¹⁹

Onto the North-South Agenda

This domestic political pressure has pushed the Seoul regime to show some evidence of progress toward talks with Pyongyang. It is doubtful, however, that the anti-nuclear, democratic movement can sway govern-

mental policy to remove nuclear weapons immediately as a step toward reunification. Instead, the government is struggling to wrest back the initiative from the opposition and may use the nuclear issue for its own political ends.

In preparing for talks with North Korea, security intellectuals at the South Korean Defense Ministry and at the National War College have been instructed to prepare a bargaining agenda for talks with North Korea. In their view, nuclear weapons represent potent psychological leverage over the north.

Officials have in mind linking withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons with redeployment and reduction of North Korea's offensive military forces. The government could then argue that it had substituted substantive North Korean concessions for a nuclear strategy of dubious credibility and military value.

At the same time, it could keep U.S. troops in Korea. As it is cheaper to keep them in Korea than in the United States, the U.S. national security establishment wants them to stay put, albeit for regional interventions rather than as a force aimed at North Korea. The elite opposition would almost certainly accommodate this strategy of separating nuclear from troop withdrawal.

This "trade in" strategy of nuclear withdrawal, however, has two risks attached to it for the South Korean regime. First, the accelerating antinuclear movement may undercut the south's nuclear bargaining power if it waits too long. Thus, there is strong political pressure for the talks to begin before the nuclear asset is devalued by domestic politics. That in turn allows North Korea to exploit Seoul's domestic political vulnerability by refusing to talk so long as Team Spirit continues—putting the blame for failure in the south's lap.

Second, the south may seek to trade its nuclear leverage for political as well as legitimate military concessions from the north. If, for example, Seoul sought Pyongyang's political recognition of the division of Korea, then the nuclear issue could poison rather than promote north-south talks. For some in Seoul, this strategy would put the burden of failure back onto North Korea while keeping the nuclear weapons in the south. But such an outcome could also backfire in domestic politics.

American Ambivalence

The U.S. Army enjoys its Korean mission. It trains in Korea with almost no constraints. The UN Command, always run by the Army Commander of U.S. Forces Korea, anchors the army's bureaucratic power in the West Pacific so that it is virtually untouchable by the navy-dominated Pacific

Command. Elements in the army may object strongly to leaving its nuclear-capable forces “naked” in Korea without army nuclear weapons at hand.

Faced with withdrawal, it would not be surprising if the U.S. Army and its South Korean military counterparts were to whip up a storm about pending North Korean attack or nuclear proliferation—a prophecy that could become self-fulfilling. Former commanders in Korea have not hesitated to join the fray on the side of keeping nuclear weapons. In a debate on the issue at a security conference in Hawaii in November 1989, for example, retired General Richard Stilwell contended that nuclear weapons are necessary to deter North Korea from launching an attack on the south.²⁰

Conversely, some in the U.S. military believe that nuclear weapons in Korea give the United States a needless political headache and declare flatly that they are militarily unnecessary. Former General John Cushman, for example, stated in Seoul in 1988 that nuclear weapons in the south make the north more rather than less reckless. From a military perspective, he added, “actual use would be an appalling catastrophe even to the victor.”²¹

As the last chapter noted, there is no political impulse in the United States that is likely to impel the Bush administration to grasp the nettle in Korea. Developments in Korea, however, mean that issue cannot be avoided any longer. Washington has no alternative but to respond to the Korean debate over nuclear weapons and its military activities in Korea. Moreover, Seoul’s discussion of the issues with Pyongyang will require close coordination with Washington.

Should the official advocates of north-south arms control and disarmament win out over the pronuclear hard-liners in the Seoul regime, the onus will be placed back onto Pyongyang. North-south talks can only succeed, however, if the liberalizing faction in Pyongyang wins out over the hard-line faction that bombs Seoul while the other faction is talking. In turn, Pyongyang’s willingness to cut a deal with Seoul will depend greatly on the United States’ willingness to support and encourage South Korean initiatives to denuclearize Korea.

Pikaton

I was in my twenties, single, and had a face that I would have felt bad to have not been called handsome. All this was gone in seconds. I heard that some American actors have insured their fingers for tens of thousands of dollars. I would not have swapped my face even if someone gave me the whole of New York State.

—Shin Yong-Su¹

In 1945 Shin Yong-Su was a twenty-six-year-old Korean youth drafted to work in the Japanese war effort as a clerk in Hiroshima. When the first *pikaton*, or “flash bomb,” fell, he was 600 meters from ground zero. He can still remember what ensued:

When I came to, I asked myself, “Am I alive or dead?” I moved one of my legs. It worked. I found that I was still alive. I managed to stand up and look around. But the scene was awful. Nothing was the same. Houses had collapsed, some leveled to the ground, others half destroyed. People began to walk out of side streets. They were half-naked. Their clothes were torn off, regardless of sex or age. Young women had bare breasts and their hair was burned. More strangely, they were hurrying. They looked blank, like they were out of their minds. They were walking in the same direction, like a water overflowing the brim, as if to get out of the ruined city. I found myself joining that stream.²

Standing not far from Mr. Shin that morning was a seven-year-old Korean schoolgirl named Oh Bok-Sun. She was waiting to go into her school class when she saw a B-29 bomber:

I saw something twinkling like silver because it caught the sun. It twinkled and twinkled. But then I was blown down and I couldn't remember anything.³

When she regained consciousness, she wanted to go home but could not because the bamboo in the schoolyard was burning. So she crossed the road and followed the people walking slowly in one direction.

They seemed very strange. Some were black and some were walking and

fell down and died here and there, sometimes in the street or in the gutter. Some women took their babies in their arms or on their back and some didn't stay together.

Someone asked for help: "Water, water." After drinking the water, they died. And some cried, "I'd like to have a bath. I hurt terribly."

So they went to the river and they died. At the river, it was so crowded that I could not get to the water. Many people wanted water so someone used the pump. But if they drank the water, they died.

I wasn't thirsty. But when I reached the bank where I had played with my friends to catch fish, so many fish were floating dead. I wondered, Why are they dead? I asked the others, but no one knew why. I could see some people had come to the riverbank to take a bath. But after bathing their bodies became black and they died.⁴

She was badly burned on her legs, head, and back wherever her dress had not absorbed the heat. Later, she found that her parents too had perished beneath the bomb.

Wonpok Huisangcha

For Koreans such as Shin Yong-Su and Oh Bok-Sun, the bombing was the excruciating finale of thirty-six years of Japanese colonialism in Korea. About 1.2 million Koreans had been forced to move to Japan between 1936 and 1945, the result of the dispossession of about 80 percent of Korean farmers from their land and a military labor draft.⁵

Of the 70,000 Koreans resident in the two target cities, about 40,000 died outright. About 30,000 Koreans survived. In turn, about 23,000 survivors returned to Korea. At the end of the Korean War, about 2,000–3,000 found themselves in North Korea, and about 20,000 in the south. Of these, about 4,000 are clustered in the southern Hapchon District in Kyong Sang-do, known locally as Korea's "Hiroshima." About 7,000 remained in Japan.⁶ They are known in Hangeul as the *wonpok huisangcha*, or atomic bomb survivors.

As Koreans in Japan had no kin networks, most were not evacuated and had nowhere to go outside the bombed cities. They remained close to the epicenter after the attacks, staying in barracks or shells of burned buildings where they were exposed to fallout. Koreans were often last to be treated, if at all, and many were left to die, their eyes picked by crows from their rotting bodies. Some were burned in mass cremations. Others were buried in mass, unmarked graves.⁷

Aftermath

Those who ended up in South Korea have been unable to forget their searing experiences at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Explains Mr. Shin,

We always fear hereditary diseases and aftereffects. We feel ashamed before our children for passing on these dangers. It is not that there is some special illness or difference. But each moment when I suffer from some disease, I feel this may be it—that I may die now.⁸

In South Korea, disabled people have traditionally faced heavy discrimination. *Wonpok huisangcha* carry this burden many times over. Many were unable to speak Korean or to adapt to the Korean life-style, or were tainted as collaborators with the Japanese. Some were shut out by their own families. Discrimination on these grounds, coupled with poverty, left them vulnerable to disease. Many had to beg to survive. Already marginalized, often survivors found their only relief in isolation, making it even harder for them to learn their native Korean and deepening their sense of inferiority.

Women survivors were often put in double jeopardy by the bombing compared with male survivors. If the husband was a bomb victim, he might die or leave the family. The woman survivor then had to raise the children. Or if he was disabled and dependent, she may have had to work and raise the family, doing double time even though she too was physically and psychologically debilitated by being bombed.

The genetic aftereffects on the children of atomic survivors remain controversial. Many female survivors, however, report devastating defects in their children. Says Mrs. Kim Jeong-Soon, a twenty-seven-year-old mother who was bombed on her first visit to Nagasaki in search of food for her baby,

My first child, a daughter, if she were alive, would be forty-five; but she died at the age of thirty-eight. The second one, a male, is alive now and is forty-three years old. The third was also a boy, but he died at the age of four because of the aftereffect of the A-bomb. The fourth was also a boy. If he were alive, he would be thirty-seven, but he died soon after birth. When the baby was born he looked like a water bag without bones. His body was only skin and water. The fifth one, a daughter, died at the age of twenty-one. The sixth was a daughter. Her age is thirty-three and she is still alive and has two children. But as her husband worried about the aftereffects of the bomb, she was divorced. So she's working in a factory. And the last one was a daughter. She is thirty, but

is very weak and still has not married because everyone worried about the aftereffects.⁹

If a woman survivor bore children with abnormalities, she was often beaten by the husband or his kin. Because the bombing tainted her ability to reproduce the patriarchal bloodline—a social role that is central to female status in Korean society—she was filled with great, sometimes unbearable shame.¹⁰ Anecdotal evidence suggests that many survivors, but especially females, tried to end their misery by suicide. “What I really wish,” says Mrs. Kim, “is to die. I cannot see people, I cannot see roads. So I do not live a life.”¹¹

Many survivors have fulfilled their death wish—as have many of their debilitated children and grandchildren.¹²

In 1967 the *wonpok huisangcha* set up the Korean Association of Atomic Bomb Survivors. The association has advocated the basic rights of the first-, second- and third-generation bomb victims to special care. Most recently, they demanded that the Japanese government pay the Korean survivors \$2.3 billion for damages and suffering incurred at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.¹³ The association, however, has not taken up the political aspects of the nuclear arms race or the threat of nuclear war in Korea. Being dependent on minimal government welfare and vulnerable to political repression, the survivors find it hard to bite the hand that feeds them, albeit miserably.

Nonetheless, the survivors know that the United States has nuclear weapons in Korea. “We cannot stand idly by at this,” says Mr. Shin, who founded the association. “Our heart just breaks to think of the danger our children face.”¹⁴

Official Neglect

Just as the Japanese survivors lost their rights to sue the United States for compensation in the 1951 peace treaty, so the South Korean *wonpok huisangcha* lost their rights to compensation from Japan in the 1965 treaty.¹⁵ The treaty normalized relations between South Korea and Japan and set a limit on war reparations. It did not recognize the special status or needs of the Korean survivors, and they received none of the reparations paid to the South Korean government. To date, the sole Japanese official help has been to pay the costs of South Korean victims who travel to Japan for medical assistance under a South Korean–Japanese agreement struck in 1981. The sole South Korean official aid has been to pay for the costs of sending the 354 victims who were able to take up this offer between 1981 and 1986, when the agreement expired.¹⁶

The survivors, therefore, have had to help themselves to endure their postnuclear travails. Their main medical treatment has been self-administered Chinese medicines or folk remedies such as ginseng. The majority of survivors still view themselves as sick today because of the bombing.¹⁷

Blame

Most survivors hate Japan and all things Japanese with a visceral passion. Even reflecting on the bombing that wrecked their postcolonial life is painful to many because they may have to think in Japanese to recall their experience, a language imposed during the colonial period.

Many victims blame primarily the Japanese for their plight. "I hate the Japanese enough to kill them all," says Mrs. Kim. "As I didn't know much about the Americans then," she adds, "I couldn't blame them for the atomic bomb. But I blamed the Japanese government. If the Japanese had surrendered earlier without sacrificing and killing so many people, it would have avoided such a disaster."¹⁸

Many survivors are more tolerant of Americans than of the Japanese when it comes to the bombing.¹⁹ Americans, however, often mistake this attitude as one of forgiveness. In fact, survivors hold the United States responsible for their fate. "I also despise the country which used the atomic weapons," says Mrs. Kim, "although they well knew that just one atomic bomb would annihilate people and all living things."²⁰

Others condemn the United States outright for the plight of the survivors. Church Women United, for example, which has taken up the welfare of the survivors, sees the nuclear victims' situation as directly linked to the contemporary nuclear threat to Korean survival. "The atomic bombs installed in Korea," they argue, "are not to protect us but to destroy us. We still live with the pain caused by the atomic explosions in Japan. We refuse to be another victim of such a disaster."²¹

Prophecy

The mere existence of *wonpok* subverts the legitimacy of the nuclear strategy, whether it is based on warfighting or threats. Embodying the past use of nuclear weapons, they portend what another nuclear war would mean for the future. As Mrs. Kim, now a seventy-year-old street vendor of vegetables, says,

If nuclear war happens in Korea, almost all the people will die, with only

a few exceptions. But even they will all be crippled and will suffer. I hope that everyone will settle disputes by peaceful negotiations. I am already seventy years old, so I don't mind for myself. But if we think of the youth, it would be a tragedy. So I hope that the world will become peaceful, solving problems by negotiation without using any nuclear weapons.²²

The survivors are a living metaphor of the lethal possibility contained within nuclear threats. Those like Mrs. Kim embody the paradox of nuclear strategy:

So long as nuclear weapons exist, then one day they will explode. I cannot understand why they keep making nuclear weapons. For what? We can do without them. We can live peacefully.²³

Many *wonpok* are politically apathetic or too overwhelmed by their personal traumas to be politically active. Others, however, have resolved that nuclear war should never happen again. Simply telling their story—so long suppressed—is an oppositional act that inspires new generations of Koreans to redouble their efforts to rid the peninsula and the world of the nuclear threat. Mrs. Kim, for example, warns that nuclear strategy is not viable:

From my experience, if nuclear war happens again, it would be better that all should be killed. Those remaining alive would all be crippled. I know because I have suffered it all. It is worse than dying.²⁴

Nuclear strategists, however, persist in disregarding her three simple lessons: that nuclear wars cannot be won; conflicts must be solved by peaceful dialogue; and nuclear strategy makes nuclear war possible.

But unlike Mrs. Kim, Mr. Shin, or Mrs. Oh, and thousands of other Koreans like them, nuclear strategists were not there when the U.S. military forged the concept of nuclear compellence on the anvil of two cities. Fixated with the power of the bomb, they will never fully comprehend Mrs. Kim's conclusion:

Nuclear weapons should not be here. If they insist on keeping the nuclear weapons in Korea, it would be better that they just wipe all of us out now. When they use them, they should eradicate everyone. Then no one would suffer through life afterward. You become crippled, no eyes, no nose, you have blood oozing out of your ears. Your legs just crumble off. What's the meaning in living like this?²⁵

Appendix A
U.S. Nuclear Organization
and Infrastructure
in South Korea

Appendix A:

U.S. Nuclear Organization and Infrastructure in South Korea

This appendix describes the defenses, logistics, storage and delivery systems, and warheads of U.S. nuclear forces operating in or related to South Korea.

Nuclear Defenses

Plans to use nuclear weapons in Korea necessitate extensive preparations to deal with the inevitable radioactive fallout plumes. To this end, the Second Infantry Division NBC (Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical) Center functions within the division's Tactical Operations Center at Camp Casey (see figure 6-2).¹ Capable of twenty-four-hour operation, the NBC Center is activated only during field deployment of the division.² In peacetime, the NBC Center conducts the NBC School, which ensures that unit-level NBC defense officers are properly instructed. It also directs the NBC Technical Evaluation Team, which evaluates the competence of all company-level NBC teams in the division.³

In wartime, the NBC Center would send out STRIKE WARN messages to U.S.–South Korean forces of impending nuclear attacks by U.S. forces. It is charged with estimating “the effects of enemy and friendly nuclear detonations and makes fallout predictions.” It would also track fallout plumes and predict fallout patterns on an “NBC situation map” and would send “downwind messages” to threatened units.

Logistics

Until September 16, 1984, the (U.S.) Korean Ammunition Management Systems organization was responsible for nuclear logistics in Korea. Thereafter, KAMS was designated the Sixth Ordnance Battalion reporting to the

Nineteenth Support Command. As of 1989, the Operations Branch of the Seventy-eighth Ordnance Detachment at Kunsan Air Base (under the command of the Sixth Ordnance Battalion headquartered at Camp Ames, Taejon) is responsible for the training and certification of personnel for duties to include convoy training, emergency destruction (ED), emergency evacuation (EV), emergency action messages (EAM), and permissive action link (PAL) training for the unit. It also conducts the tactical movement of nuclear weapons, keeps the nuclear accounts for nuclear weapons (account WT4RT1), and certifies that nuclear weapons have been properly calibrated.⁴ This technical work is likely conducted at the detachment's facilities at Kunsan Air Base, where it maintains a "calibration building" and a rear storage site.⁵ That the Seventy-eighth Detachment is nuclear-capable is evidenced by the Eighth Army's "Nuclear Weapons Technical Inspection" of the unit in November 1985.⁶

Storage and Delivery Systems

Kunsan Air Base is a key storage site for the U.S. nuclear arsenal in South Korea. At Camp Ames, the army maintains a "maximum security area."⁷ That this site is used to store nuclear weapons is signified by a November 6, 1985, nuclear accident/incident control exercise by the Sixth Ordnance Battalion, which provided security and exercised command and control. The 194th Maintenance Battalion furnished the decontamination teams.⁸ This exercise was a repeat of an earlier exercise on February 2, 1983, by the 194th Maintenance Battalion.⁹ (Accident response capabilities are described in appendix B.)

The army maintains a forward contingency nuclear weapons storage site and a U.S. security team at Tobongsan Ammunition Center near Uijongbu (between Seoul and the demilitarized zone), although that site is now under South Korean control.¹⁰

In wartime, truck and helicopter convoys would deliver nuclear weapons from peacetime storage locations to field storage locations in the battlefield. Nuclear convoys for a typical U.S. 155-mm nuclear artillery battery would consist of one load-carrier vehicle for the nuclear weapon, a security vehicle, one half-ton cargo trailer, two radio sets, and twelve personnel. (The 203-mm nuclear artillery battery, however, would require use of more trucks and vans because of different weapon assembly requirements).¹¹ Nuclear delivery units would also travel to the field storage locations by CH-47 or UH1/UH60 helicopters.

Atomic Demolition Munitions

Atomic demolition munitions (ADMs) were an important and arguably obsolete component of the U.S. nuclear arsenal in Korea. Twenty-one

atomic demolition mines were reportedly stored in 1985 in Korea. Until at least as late as 1987, the Special Forces Division of U.S. Forces Korea kept ADM engineers stationed at Yongsan Base at Seoul, known as Teams A and B.¹² These engineers can detonate ADMs with a timer or by various forms of remote control. Ready to be emplaced near or under the demilitarized zone or on very hard point targets, “these small nuclear weapons are intended,” according to the U.S. Army, to

block avenues of approach by cratering defiles [narrow valleys] or creating rubble; sever routes of communication by destroying tunnels, bridges, roads, and canal locks; create areas of tree blowdown and forest fires; crater areas including frozen bodies of water subject to landings by hostile airmobile units, [and] create water barriers by the destruction of dams and reservoirs.¹³

These impassable craters would halt advancing North Korean tanks.

At the end of the 1960s, ADM teams in Korea were prepared to destroy military facilities in the wake of retreat, such as Kimpo airport, Han River bridges, and so forth.¹⁴ In light of the fallout hazards of ADMs amidst the population in and around Seoul and the forward-defense strategy, ADMs may be targeted now only for use on or near the demilitarized zone—which virtually requires either early first use of nuclear weapons or their immediate evacuation from Korea. As the U.S. commander in Korea, Gen. Louis Menetry, stated in December 1987, it would be “pretty dumb” to keep nuclear weapons near the demilitarized zone.¹⁵

As the medium ADMs formerly stockpiled at Kunsan have now been dismantled, it can be presumed that they have been removed.¹⁶ Only Special ADMs (delivered by special forces) are now available in the U.S. nuclear arsenal. It is unknown, however, whether any of these are stationed in Korea, and if so, whether the ADM teams are capable of delivering them. No other nuclear-capable special forces are stationed in Korea or Japan/Okinawa. The only other nuclear-capable special forces in Pacific Command are found in the Pacific Fleet’s Special Warfare Group One, headquartered in San Diego. The navy would be loath, however, to commit these forces to an “Army sideshow” in Korea in wartime. ADMs may be no longer relevant, therefore, to nuclear war in Korea. Whether ADM teams and targets have been removed from U.S. Forces Korea’s war plans is unknown.

Offshore Weapons

Offshore, the navy’s Seventh Fleet supports the army’s land-based arsenal with an array of nuclear weapons, including air-delivered gravity bombs that would be launched from aircraft carriers. Surface warships and submarines have long been armed with antisubmarine nuclear rockets and

depth charges that could attack North Korean submarines. Since June 1984 U.S. ships and subs have also carried Tomahawk sea-launched land-attack nuclear cruise missiles, designed in part to attack heavily defended command posts and airfields as are found in North Korea.¹⁷

Lance Missiles

Since 1973 shortly after the nuclear-capable Lance missile entered the army's arsenal, Lance was included in USFK's *Oplan* and was briefly deployed to Korea during exercises (see chapter 5). The army stationed its first battery of Lance missiles in Korea on February 9, 1987. The battery became operational in early March.¹⁸

As of June 1988 a U.S. unit known as Weapons Support Detachment—Korea, or WSD-K, maintained a Lance missile liaison team. As WSD-K is responsible for delivering U.S. Army nuclear weapons in Korea, the existence of a Lance liaison team suggests strongly that the nuclear-capable Lance is nuclear-armed in Korea.¹⁹ WSD-K's nuclear operating procedures, however, refer only to nuclear artillery. It is not known publicly whether nuclear warheads for the Lance missile have been sent to Korea. Given the small size of a battery, however, it seems unlikely that they would be armed with conventional warheads that would have little impact on a major battle.

Why the Lance was deployed at this time is unknown. In the aftermath of the alleged North Korean bombing of a Korean Airlines plane in 1987, the army may have hoped to prevent low-level attacks by strengthening its nuclear threat and protecting the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988.

Nuclear Artillery

The U.S. Army's capability to deliver nuclear artillery shells is contained in the Second Infantry Division's three combat brigades. These in turn are subdivided into eight maneuver battalions, being three infantry, two of mechanized infantry, two tank battalions, and an air cavalry squadron.²⁰

The division's artillery is organized into three battalions of 155-mm howitzers and a 203-mm howitzer battalion with a lone multiple-launch rocket system battery. The division also has a target acquisition battery.²¹

The division command posts and the First Brigade are located at Camp Casey. First Brigade, known as Iron Brigade, consists of two armored battalions and one mechanized infantry battalion.

Just south of Division HQ and over the hills is Camp Hovey, where the "All Infantry" Second Brigade is located, composed of two infantry battalions.

The Third Brigade HQ is located at Camp Howze in the valley known as the western corridor, on the main highway leading northwest from Seoul. A mechanized infantry battalion is also stationed at Camp Howze. The brigade has another infantry battalion at Camp Greaves north of the Imjin river.

The Air Cavalry Squadron is headquartered at Camp Owen. Its air troops are located at La Guardia Army Air Field and Camp Stanley. This squadron is organized with one HQ and four air cavalry troop units.

The division artillery is headquartered at Camp Stanley, near Uijongbu. The direct-support artillery battalions for the First and Second Brigades are located at Camp Stanley; for the Third Brigade, they are at Camp Pelham. Each 155-mm artillery battalion is equipped with three batteries of six howitzers each. One battalion is self-propelled, and the other two are towed.

The general-support artillery battalion is located at Camp Essayons near Uijongbu. This unit has two batteries of six 203-mm self-propelled howitzers and one multiple-launch rocket system battery of nine launchers.

Appendix B
U.S. Nuclear Accident
Response Capabilities
in South Korea

Appendix B: U.S. Nuclear Accident Response Capabilities in South Korea

Nuclear weapons may be involved in accidents that result in non-nuclear and/or subcritical explosions, and fire and dispersal of radioactive materials.¹ Recognizing these hazards, U.S. military units involved with nuclear weapons maintain accident response and recovery units. At least thirteen such units are known to exist in Korea (see table B-1). They conduct regular nuclear weapon accident exercises (see chapter 7).

Many military personnel believe that a nuclear weapon accident is most likely to occur while nuclear weapons are being moved by helicopter airlift or road transport. The (U.S.) Weapons Support Detachment—Korea is one of the units that might have to respond to a nuclear weapon accident. Its operating procedures state unambiguously that a fire or accident creates “a potential hazard from the high explosive and radioactive components.”²

“Any weapon involved in an accident or incident,” states the detachment, “may rupture or break apart. This could result in the spread of radioactive contamination and high explosives.”³

In a war zone like Korea, a weapon may also become hazardous due to North Korean attack, such as a direct or near hit by artillery fire. This contingency is explicitly recognized in the procedures for handling nuclear weapons in Korea (see chapters 6 and 7).

The mind boggles at the potential loss of control of nuclear weapons should an accident or attack render the weapon hazardous in the midst of a war. In such circumstances (if it follows its standard operating procedures), the detachment will *abandon* a nuclear weapon that it judges to be too hazardous to handle:

If one of the following occurs the [nuclear weapons] custodian should cease firefighting efforts and evacuate a minimum of 366 meters upwind or as far as the terrain and tactical situation allow:

Table B-1
Nuclear Weapons Accident Response Units, South Korea

<i>Installation</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Unit Designation</i>	<i>Major Command</i>
1. Camp Casey <i>Capabilities:</i>	Ton Du Chon AS, B, G, HT.	2AVN BTN	2ID
2. Camp Essayons <i>Capabilities:</i>	Uijongbu A, B, BE, D, E, G, S, T.	6BN37FA	2INF
3. Camp Henry <i>Capabilities:</i>	Taegu A, AS, B, D, G, HT, L, PA, S, T.	19 SPT CMD	EUSA
4. Camp Hialeah <i>Capabilities:</i>	Pusan AS, D, G.	257 SIG CO	EUSA
5. Camp Page <i>Capabilities:</i>	Chunchon A, B, BE, D, G, S.	WSD-K	EUSA
6. Camp Red Cloud <i>Capabilities:</i>	Uijongbu A, B, BE, D, G, T.	8 EOD DET	EUSA
7. Kunsan AB <i>Capabilities:</i>	Kunsan A, AS, B, BE, D, E, G, L, M, PA, S.	8 CMBT SPT GP	PACAF
8. Kwang Ju AB KO <i>Capabilities:</i>	Kwang Ju A, B, BE, D, G, S.	6171STABSQ	PACAF
9. Osan AB <i>Capabilities:</i>	Song Tan A, AS, B, BE, D, E, G, HT, L, M, PA, S.	51CSG/DW	PACAF
10. Suwon AB <i>Capabilities:</i>	Suwon A, B, BE, D, E, G, S.	6107 CSS	PACAF
11. Taegu AB <i>Capabilities:</i>	Taegu A, B, BE, D, G, L, M, PA, S.	6168 CSG/DW	PACAF
12. Yongsan <i>Capabilities:</i>	Seoul AS, ArS, B, D, G, HT, M.	18 MEDCOM (PROV)	EUSA
13. Yongsan <i>Capabilities:</i>	Seoul A, AS, ArS, B, BE, D, DS, E, G, HP, HT, L, M, PA, S.	38th CHEM DET	EUSA
14. Yongsan <i>Capabilities:</i>	Seoul B, G, HT.	17 AVN GP (CMBT)	EUSA

Source: Joint Nuclear Accident Coordinating Center, 1987 *Nuclear Accident Response Capability Listing*, January 6, 1987; released under a U.S. Freedom of Information Act request to Andrew S. Burrows, Natural Resources Defense Council, Washington, D.C.

Note: Acronyms for capabilities: A=alpha radiation monitoring; AS=air sampling; ArS=aerial survey; B=beta radiation monitoring; BE=breathing equipment; D=decontamination; DS=design specification; E=EOD (explosive ordnance disposal team); G=gamma radiation monitoring; HP=health phys; HT=helo transport; L=legal; M=medical; PA=public affairs; S=security; T=tritium.

Acronyms: AVN=aviation; BN, BTN=battalion; CHEM=chemical; CMBT=combat; CMD=command; CSG=combat support group; CSS=combat support squad; DET=detachment; DW=disaster preparedness; EOD=explosive ordnance disposal team; EUSA=Eighth U.S. Army; FA=field artillery; GP=group; 2ID, 2 INF=Second Infantry Division; MEDCOM(PROV)=medical command (provisional); PACAF=Pacific Air Forces; SIG CO=Signal Company; SPT=support; STABSQ=Station Air Base Squadron; WSD=Weapons Support Detachment—Korea.

- (1) The weapon is too hot to touch.
- (2) The paint starts to blister.
- (3) The HE [high-energy explosive] component begins to melt.
- (4) The HE is "torching."
- (5) The custodian feels the possibility of an explosion is imminent.⁴

A perimeter guard force is then to be set up. North Korean forces could then eliminate or bypass the security force and obtain control of a nuclear weapon that may be about to explode or burn. Alternatively, the weapon may stabilize and end up in North Korean hands.

Appendix C
U.S.–South Korean
Nuclear Coordination
and Integration

Appendix C:

U.S.—South Korean Nuclear Coordination and Integration

This appendix describes the three U.S. units that integrate and coordinate with the South Korean military delivery capabilities to fulfill the nuclear mission in a Korean war. These units are the two army Combat Support Coordination Teams, or CSCTs, and the (U.S.) Weapons Support Detachment—Korea, or WSD-K.

CSCT 1

CSCT 1 was established on September 1, 1975, after an agreement was signed between CINCUNC and the commanding general, First ROK Army (FROKA). It had two rationales.

First, it was to “strengthen the command and control link” necessary for UNC operational control of FROKA. Second, it was to ensure that U.S. and ROK support and combat forces were coordinated. The command and control link to UNC was terminated in November 1978 when the Combined Forces Command was formed.¹ On April 17, 1978, a liaison team from CSCT 1 was deployed to the ROK Army Capital Corps, the highly political unit used by Park Chung Hee for internal political-military control in and around Seoul. On January 1, 1980, CSCT 2 was organized at the Capital Corps, presumably supplanting CSCT 1’s liaison team (CSCT 2 was later abolished).²

CSCT 1’s mission was adjusted to focus on coordination. The mission was changed again in 1982 when a Combined All Sources Intelligence Center was activated in the First ROK Army.³ The biggest element in the CSCT 1 is devoted to intelligence operations, involving collection, processing, production, and disseminating all types of intelligence, both for FROKA and U.S. Forces Korea activities in the FROKA area.⁴

Through the operations element of CSCT 1, the team has almost daily contact with virtually every section of its counterpart section at FROKA including plans, training, fire support coordination, army aviation, nuclear

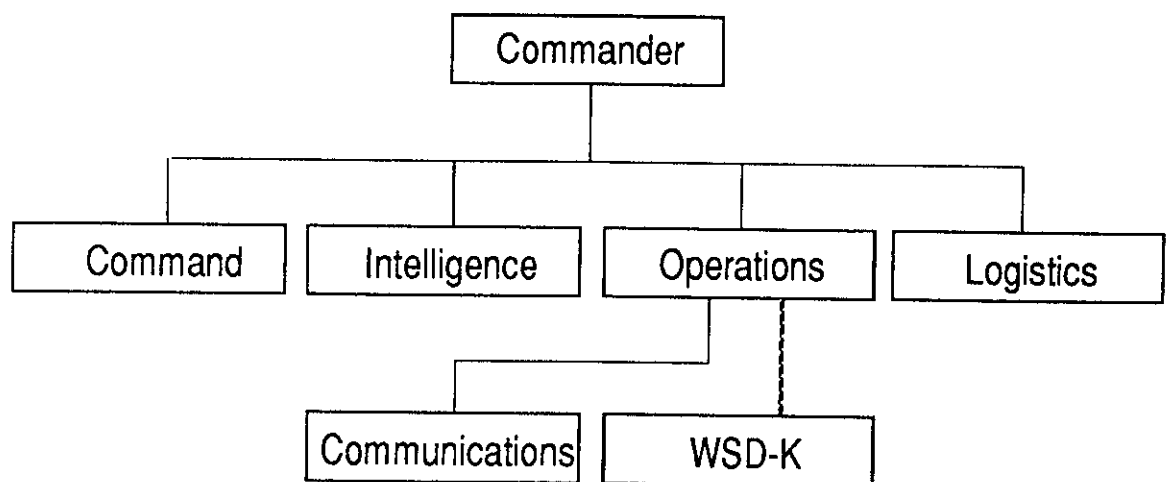
defensive and offensive warfare, chemical warfare, and electronic warfare.⁵ Other elements work on communications-electronics, engineering, and logistics (see figure C-1).⁶

In addition to specified missions, CSCT 1 team members fulfill what are termed “implied missions.” These additional missions boil down to developing and maintaining “effective and personal relationships” with FROKA general officers and counterparts, all the while maintaining a “solid working relationship” with CFC staff. In short, they are to bridge the enormous cultural gap that blocks effective U.S.–South Korean integration of military organization, doctrine, strategy, and tactics. In CSCT 1’s words:

These relationships are necessary in order to provide responsive, effective, and timely staff assistance. Team members must also acquire a thorough understanding of FROKA’s organization, methods of operation, and its [*sic*] capabilities and limitations. Only through the development of these working relationships, and by acquiring this knowledge, can we facilitate responsive support, and ensure that team members are able to precisely articulate both FROKA and CFC requirements.⁷

Team members are not advisers, and they do not fall in the normal chain of command.⁸ Nor do they replicate any functions already fulfilled within the FROKA staff.

As of December 1988, CSCT-1 required forty-seven U.S. troops, five South Korean liaison officers, and twelve KATUSAs, plus five officers who work jointly in a Combined All Sources Intelligence Center. CSCT 1 also



Source: Slide 6, attached to CSCT 1, Command Briefing, November 2, 1987; released under U.S. Freedom of Information Act Request.

Figure C-1. CSCT #1 Organization, 1988

requires troops to staff the nuclear liaison element from the U.S. Weapons Support Detachment—Korea.⁹ The CSCT 1 team works out of offices at the FROKA HQ, but is billeted at U.S. Forces Korea's Camp Long.¹⁰ The FROKA also has a liaison officer in the coordination team. The FROKA directly liaises with the separate Weapons Support Detachment, or WSD-K, at Camp Long.¹¹ Starting in 1978, WSD-K also assigned a liaison team to CSCT 1.

The CSCT 1 team is commanded by a U.S. combat arms army colonel who directly represents the commander in chief of the Combined Forces Command at FROKA Command Group. He ensures that "all possible efforts are made to fully integrate CSCT 1 with the FROKA staff."¹² The limits of this integration are embodied by CSCT's intelligence element, which operates a fixed and mobile Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility.¹³ The element keeps U.S.-only information passing through unilateral U.S. channels from South Korean eyes.

CSCT 2-3

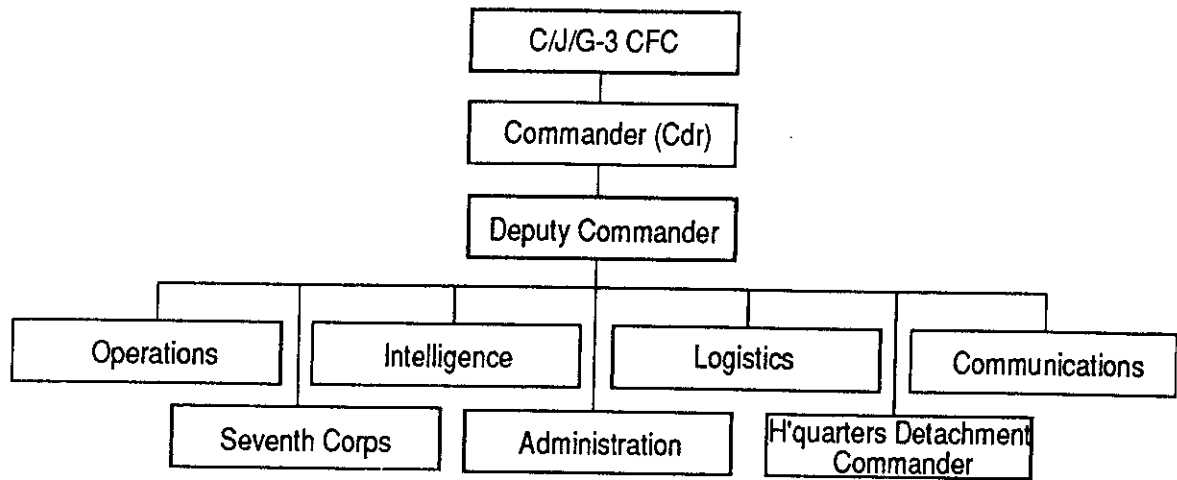
Located at Third ROK Army HQ at Yongin, CSCT 2 has responsibilities almost identical to those of CSCT 1, except that it relates to the Third ROK Army rather than to the First ROK Army. But CSCT 2 provides a separate coordination team to support the operations and intelligence activities of the Seventh ROK Army Corps.

CSCT 3 grew out of the liaison team at the Third ROK Army fielded by CSCT 2 on February 17, 1983. On June 1, 1983, a provisional CSCT 3 supplanted this liaison team at TROKA HQ, followed on June 1, 1984, by a liaison team at the ROK Army VII Corps.¹⁴

In the other direction, the TROKA has a liaison officer attached to CSCT 3 at Yongsan, and another liaison officer incorporated into the Weapons Support Detachment at Camp Page near Chunchon.¹⁵

Unlike CSCT 1, no WSD-K unit is directly assigned to the team (see figure C-2). Nonetheless, WSD-K personnel are attached to CSCT 3's Operations Section.¹⁶ As of June 1983, a liaison team from WSD-K has been posted at CSCT 3.¹⁷ CSCT 3's Operations Section monitors evaluations of the WSD-K's nuclear support team activities. This section also evaluates the training and maintenance support for the nuclear Theater Automated Command and Control System—Korea.¹⁸

Moreover CSCT 3's Signal Section operates a twenty-four-hour-per-day Defense Special Security Communications System telecommunications center known as COMMCEN. In addition to supporting U.S. and South Korean staffs, a Combined All Source Intelligence Center, and a special security office, COMMCEN serves a "special weapons detachment"—that is, WSD-K. The Signal Section also runs an "MSC-64 satellite terminal



Source: Portion of Command Briefing, CSCT3; released under U.S. Freedom of Information Act Request.

Figure C-2. CSCT #3 Organization, 1988

that provides emergency action communications to TROKA, CSCT 3, and WSD-K.¹⁹

The nuclear coordination functions of both CSCTs are described in chapter 7.

Weapons Support Detachment—Korea (WSD-K)

Until December 1, 1972, the responsibility for nuclear support operations rested with the Second Infantry Division. On that date, the Fourth U.S. Army Missile Command took over this mission. The First Battalion of the Forty-second Field Artillery, armed with Honest John missiles, assumed all the missions between January 15 and March 1973, when these responsibilities were transferred to the newly operational Weapons Support Detachment—Korea. At that time, WSD-K was assigned to Camp Jackson under the aegis of the Fourth Missile Command. In August, WSD-K moved to Camp Page. In December 1977 WSD-K was reorganized and assigned 24 officers and 181 enlisted men. It was authorized to operate ten cannon teams.²⁰

In 1978 liaison teams were assigned from WSD-K to I Corps (ROK/U.S.) in Uijongbu and CSCT 1 at FROKA HQ in Wonju.²¹ In May the WSD-K atomic demolition mission was terminated. The detachment was placed under the command of the Eighth U.S. Army. In May 1981 the nuclear combat unit was put under the Nineteenth Support Command for administrative purposes.²² In March 1984 the unit was expanded to in-

clude operational and training elements, and the number of nuclear artillery teams was reduced to eight.²³

The same year, the unit was transferred yet again to the newly created Eighth Army Special Troops Command (EAST). Ad hoc arrangements between small units and higher headquarters reportedly caused serious command and control deficiencies and diverted senior commanders from their primary tasks to attending to unit-level daily details. These problems prompted studies from 1979 which culminated in the creation of EAST in May 1981. In January 1984 EAST was established as a full-fledged command within the Eighth U.S. Army.²⁴ Shortly thereafter, WSD-K was transferred from the Nineteenth Support Command.

The commander of WSD-K is headquartered at Yongsan Base inside the U.S. Forces Korea Nuclear Plans and Operations Division (in Building 2462).²⁵ The bulk of the WSD-K staff, however, is located at Camp Page.²⁶ WSD-K has liaison teams posted with the U.S.–South Korean Combined Field Army in the artillery element at Camp Red Cloud, and in the Combat Support Coordination Team at Camp Long, which coordinates South Korean support and involvement in nuclear operations.²⁷

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87. Interview, former State Department, Nov., 1987.
88. Ibid.
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into with South Korea with respect to the introduction, use, storage, and removal of nuclear weapons; their security and rationale and other aspects. Whether they received answers is unknown. See U.S. Congress, Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Security Commitments Abroad of the Committee on Foreign Relations, "United States Security Agreements and Security Commitments Abroad, Republic of Korea," Hearings, 91st Congress, part 6, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1970, p. 1669. Testimony to Congress on May 25, 1977, recorded the following interchange:

"*General Singlaub*: We have, as you probably know, a fairly large number of conventional weapons systems in the hands of the Republic of Korea that are capable of firing nuclear weapons, [deleted]. . .

Mr. Beard: So, it is a known fact that the ROK's have or, if were to be withdrawn, would have nuclear capability in some form or fashion?

General Singlaub: Well, they would have the capability only in terms of having the tubes, or the missile systems. [Deleted]

Mr. Beard: So there is no plan as we withdraw, or when we have total withdrawal to [deleted].

This text can be read as saying that the United States has plans to fire nuclear weapons with ROK artillery; that this fact raises the question of South Korean proliferation; and that Congress has been apprised of the integration. In U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, "Review of the Policy Decision to Withdraw United States Ground Forces from Korea," Hearings, May–Sept. 1977, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1978, p. 59.

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