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Panel 1 – Partnership in Peace: Foundations for the U.S.-R.O.K. Alliance

ENDING THE ROK-U.S. ALLIANCE?

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I was asked by the organizers of this conference to think about how the American commitment to the Republic of Korea might come to an end, and found myself instead thinking back to how it had begun, and how much it appeared to change in the 1990s. It seems more valuable to examine this history than to speculate about something that neither party—and perhaps not even North Korea—is prepared to pursue today. American troop involvement in Korea is now 61 years old, and is part of a larger archipelago of military bases in Asia and Europe that is also 61 years old. Never before did the world witness a leading power basing its troops on the territory of all but one (France) of its leading economic competitors, or five of six great powers (Germany and Japan may not now be "great powers," but that, too, is the result of U.S. strategy). This archipelago might appear to be a stark anachronism, but American troops in East Asia have been so deeply bound up with Japanese and Korean security—and today with containing China—that imagining an end to the American alliance with Korea is to conjure with a world that has not existed since the last great war ended.

Today relations between Washington and Seoul are worse than they have ever been, but that is largely because of U.S. policies toward the North. For more than a decade the serious and seemingly never-ending problem of American policy toward North Korea, as presented in soundbites and newspaper paragraphs, has read like a cartoon: the United States, in its original innocence, thinking only of the best interests of the American and Korean people, confronts a renegade state run by a mad totalitarian dictator, starving his people to death in the interests of just one thing: nuclear weapons and the missiles to carry them. Once this lunatic has those means at his disposal, he will not hesitate to take out one, two, many American cities.

In our paper of record, *The New York Times*, we can witness the alpha and the omega of this long-running cartoon: in the immediate aftermath of the four-day ground war that defeated the Iraqi Army in 1991, the *Times*' foreign affairs op-ed columnist, Leslie Gelb, located "the next renegade state:" a country "run by a vicious dictator" with SCUD missiles, "a million men under arms," and likely to possess nuclear weapons "in a few years." North Korea was the culprit, of course—another Iraq, all this coming a decade before the "axis of evil."[1] Neatly extruded was the history of U.S. conflict with North Korea, going back to the original State Department decisions in 1944 to pursue a military occupation of Korea—because of worries about Kim Il Sung and others like him. More than a decade after Gelb's piece another *New York Times* op-ed columnist quoted a Korean in Japan to the effect that North Korea would wipe out Washington and New York if the U.S. attacked the North.[2] Just when you think the cartoons are only that, along comes the real North Korea, virtually parodying the worst case scenarios of Beltway hardliners (enriched uranium technology being merely the most recent example). Or along comes a respected former Defense Secretary in 2003 who tells a reporter that North Korea might soon have enough nuclear warheads to begin exploding them in tests or exporting them to terrorists. "The nuclear program now underway in North Korea poses an imminent danger of nuclear weapons being detonated in American cities," he charged.[3] How is it possible to unpack a measure of truth from this vexed confrontation, now in its seventh decade?

History makes a difference, and I want to argue that the history of U.S.-Korean relations is really the most important thing we need to know in figuring out American relations with North Korea in the past decade, in thinking through how the U.S. alliance with the ROK might change, and how that change might contribute to Korean reunification. The North Korean leadership is a close student of this history, because it has to be; its behavior since the end of the Cold War is a textbook case of how an enemy who knows a particular history in its bones, would act and react. Meanwhile most American leaders have next to no knowledge of North Korea, but much more damaging, they usually have had little understanding of the American role in Korea going back to the end of World War II, and the profound responsibility that the U.S. bears for Korea's division, the coming of the Korean War, the failure since 1953 ever to end that war, and the kind of country that we witness across the demilitarized zone.

So let me attempt to list what I would take to be some of the more important historical lessons of the past 61 years (with most of these lessons coming from the declassified record of American diplomacy), and then adduce some more from the past decade. A longer historical timeline uncovers the reasons why American troops remain in Korea more than six decades after they first landed, and why it is so difficult to imagine their departure anytime soon:

- The U.S. bears the major responsibility for the division of Korea at the 38th parallel, because it took this decision unilaterally in mid-August 1945, without consulting any of our wartime allies, and of course no Koreans, and then proceeded to set up a full military occupation south of the parallel. The Soviets acquiesced in Korea's division and built up the Kim regime, but removed their troops in 1948.
- The ROK government that emerged in 1948 after this three-year occupation was more an American creation than any postwar government in East Asia, and is now the subject of official inquiries because of the large number of collaborators with Japan that the U.S. midwifed into South Korean politics.
- The U.S. created its stake in the security of South Korea in the famous "fifteen weeks" in 1947, when the containment doctrine and the Marshall Plan came to fruition; the rationale for doing so was the "reverse course" in Japan, to establish Japan once again as a regional industrial power, shorn of its military and political clout, and reinvolve it with former colonial economies (the ROK, Taiwan, Southeast Asia).
- Because Congress refused to fund the $600 million bill that would put the ROK on the containment line with Greece and Turkey, however, this commitment had to remain secret: but Dean Acheson told a Senate committee in 1947 that we had drawn the line in Korea. This commitment governed the Truman/Acheson decision to come to the defense of the ROK in 1950.
- Because of the revolutionary challenge presented by the new North Korean government, and the volatility of the Syngman Rhee government with its frequent threats to march north, Acheson fashioned a civil war deterrent: we would contain the North and constrain the South. This is the essence of what he meant to say in his famous "Press Club" speech in January 1950.[4]
- Washington has not departed from that civil war deterrent to this day, and it is the primary reason for the continued presence of U.S. troops in Korea—we do not trust the Koreas to be alone together. Until the very recent period, furthermore, American commanders have worried that without the backing of U.S. forces, the North might be able to win a war against the South.[5]
- MacArthur took over supreme command of Korean forces in July 1950, and the U.S. is still not willing to return operational control to Koreans. This is the best (but by no means the only) example of the essential inequality of the alliance.
- The Truman/Acheson war for containment in the summer of 1950 was a success, but the Truman/Acheson/MacArthur war for "roll-back" (in the terms of the operative document, NSC 81 in September 1950) got us into a war with China, and that debacle took any serious effort at "liberation" of communist regimes off the table down to the end of the Cold War.
- To stabilize the Korean civil war, amid frequently voiced fears that the North or the South would start the war up again, Dulles reluctantly decided in 1957 to introduce nuclear weapons into the Korean peninsula (he was reluctant because the decision broke article 13D of the armistice agreement).[6]
- Nuclear weapons remained in Korea until the end of 1991, when George H.W. Bush removed them—because it would be impossible to pressure Pyongyang over its Yongbyon reactor while maintaining such weapons in the South, and because the Army

wanted out of nuclear weapons, given the availability of precision-targeted, high-yield conventional weapons.

- Nonetheless, the standard operating procedures of American war plans since 1958 have called for the early use of battlefield and tactical nuclear weapons in a new Korean War; this is a critical reason for the forward stationing of so many North Korean divisions (so they can get into the South and "mingle" before nukes are used).
- Pyongyang's desire to eliminate or counter that nuclear threat has been palpable since the 1950s, and the U.S. threat gave it rights of self-defense under the NPT and international law more generally.[7] Thus North Korea argues that it is merely engaged in deterrence, that is, the classic argument that once both sides have nuclear weapons, the resulting Mexican standoff negates the possibility of use.
- The U.S. began aerial and electronic surveillance of North Korea before the Korean War began, and since has maintained an ever more intensive surveillance by all means necessary; therefore, one can assume anything that can be seen above ground (like the famous Yongbyon "waste site") is meant to be seen.
- During the war from 1950-53 the North Koreans put nearly everything underground (schools, factories, airplane hangars) because of American control of the air in the war. They have built underground ever since, with an estimated 15,000 underground installations of security interest. This is a rational response to a condition that William Perry once referred to at the beginning of the era of "smart" weapons: "anything that can be seen is lost."
- North Korea privileges one value against all others, the Western doctrine of the sovereign equality of all nations. When they say "sovereignty is life" and its absence is death, they express the decision rules of the only communist country ever to be occupied by an American army—and to have survived. This regime may go down, but in its present configuration and at any point since 1948, it will go down fighting.

I hope there is much food for thought in this clipped look at the long background to Korean-American relations, and at the basic structure of the alliance hammered out in the past six decades. For purposes of space, however, let me now move to the more recent period, and make the following points:

- Contrary to many critics, the 1994 Framework Agreement completely froze North Korea's huge (and hugely expensive) plutonium complex at Yongbyon for eight years, with IAEA inspectors on the ground 24/7, and seals and cameras on the buildings.
- This agreement came after President Clinton decided in June 1994 on a preemptive attack on Yongbyon, even if that attack might lead to general war on the peninsula; Jimmy Carter's intervention (flying off to meet with Kim Il Sung) resulted in the freeze.
- President Kim Young Sam later said he was not informed or consulted about this near-war.
- The Bush administration has sought regime change in the North, while bickering internally about how to achieve it.
- The Bush administration dislikes Roh Moo Hyun, and openly backed his opponent in the 2002 election.
- President Roh Moo Hyun, accordingly, has worried mightily that the U.S. might attack the North over his objections—or without even asking him.
- The Kelly visit in October 2002, accusing the North of a second nuclear bomb program, caused the North to pull out its 1993-94 playbook and withdraw again from the NPT, unfreeze its reactors, and reclaim 8000 fuel rods; it may now have made six or seven nuclear weapons, with no real penalties for having done so.

- Abrupt American troop redeployments (shifting 9000 soldiers from Korea to Iraq) created a crisis of confidence in Korean leaders, military and civilian.
- Using U.S. troops in this way raises the specter of involving Korea willy-nilly in a war to defend Taiwan against the PRC, terrifying Korean leaders.
- These and other Bush policies have pushed Korean-American relations to a nadir unseen since 1945, with ROK opinion polls showing rapid increases in anti-Americanism.

Diplomacy Works

With these outline points as background, we can return to a narrative. I would like to treat four questions: the diplomacy of the 1990s, which almost resulted in transforming the Korean conflict within the confines of the American-built security system in Northeast Asia; the deeply conflicted and therefore essentially derelict North Korea policy of the Bush administration; the lingering constraints of history; and what the U.S. should do to reinvigorate the alliance structure.

Dramatic changes in South Korean and American policy beginning in 1994, a steady Chinese policy of equidistance and support, and compromises in recent years by North Korea that belie its obstinate, nasty image produced one major diplomatic success, a second near miss, and a clear path forward to preserving the U.S.-ROK alliance while defusing confrontation on the peninsula. A three-year crisis over the North's nuclear program nearly led to war in June 1994, but energetic diplomacy got the North's nuclear reactor frozen with the October Framework Agreement in 1994—and it is remained frozen for eight years. In 1997 the North agreed to "four-power talks" (the U.S., China, both Koreas) to replace the continuing technical state of war, while quietly dropping its previous refusal to deal with a South that never signed the armistice. Those talks, now lapsed, were very important because their stated goal was to bring a final end to the Korean conflict through a peace settlement.

At the end of August 1998 the North launched a rocket that entered the stratosphere over the northern tip of Japan's Honshu Island, in a failed attempt to put a satellite in orbit—thus to herald the 50th anniversary of the DPRK on September 9, 1998. This event was widely (and easily) construed as a massive new threat of long-range missiles from the North, a threat perceived as uncomfortably genuine by wide sectors of the Japanese population, but also a heaven-sent gift to American advocates of National Missile Defense.[8] From its inception the North has always enjoyed fostering a fearsome image, but its missiles, like its Yongbyon nuclear reactor, were mainly useful as bargaining chips with the U.S.. The provocative missile launch was followed by a major agreement with Washington in September 1999 to halt missile tests in return for a slow and partial lifting of the 50-year-old American economic embargo on the North, and an American turn toward an engagement policy. When the Clinton administration finally got around to lifting parts of the embargo in mid-June of 2000, just ahead of the North-South summit, the North reaffirmed its commitment to a moratorium on missile tests. Bill Clinton nearly reached a deal to buy out all of the North's medium- and long-range missiles, but the 2000 election negated the deal. Since it was once on the table, however, history will not be kind to those who pushed it aside in the interests of renewed confrontation.

The turn of the new millennium heralded a major turning point in North Korean foreign policy. In January 2000 Pyongyang began a diplomatic offensive, opening relations with Italy, Germany, England, the Philippines, and Canada, and it has held discussions about doing the same with France, Japan, and of course Washington. A first-ever high-level North Korean delegation arrived at the ASEAN meetings in July 2000, where Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met the North Korean foreign minister for the first time, which was a prelude to the subsequent exchange of visits between Gen. Cho Myŏng-nok and Ms. Albright in October 2000. It seems clear that Kim Jong Il intended to greet the new century with a diplomatic posture much different than his father's in the 20th century. It is Kim Dae Jung, however, who led the process of reconciliation.

Kim Dae Jung's "Sunshine" Diplomacy

President Kim did more to change policy toward the North than any previous South Korean or American president, in spite of Seoul facing a far greater immediate threat than anyone else. His patient and persistent "sunshine policy" grew out of his long-term study of the North-South problem, and his experience as a leader whose adult lifetime spans the entire existence of the national division and both Korean states. When Kim Dae Jung finally won election in December 1997, the significance of his victory is that he could never have been elected during the Cold War; security agencies in Korea would have prevented it. But in a different era, he and his supporters organized the first genuine democratic transition to the opposition since the ROK was founded. This elemental fact and the new orientation toward the North speaks volumes to the benefits that democracy has brought to the South, and will someday bring to the North.

At his inauguration in February 1998 Kim pledged to "actively pursue reconciliation and cooperation" with North Korea, to inaugurate a long period of "peaceful coexistence" with Pyongyang, and to declare his support for Pyongyang's attempts at better relations with Washington and Tokyo (in total contrast with his predecessors, who hated any hint of such rapprochement). Kim Dae Jung was the first head of state publicly to call for an end to the fifty-year-old U.S. embargo against the North, which he did during a visit to Washington in June 1998. Kim also shipped huge amounts of food and other forms of aid to the North without demanding concessions, and refused to allow himself to be provoked by North Korean hardliners—thus ending the tit-for-tat practice of each side never moving an inch farther than the other side, which for decades assured that there could be no progress in North-South relations.

Kim encouraged many South Korean businesses to invest in the North, and supported especially massive investment by the late Hyundai founder and native of northern Korea Chŏng Chu-yŏng, who was at the forefront of North-South economic relations for years. In August 2000 he went to Pyongyang again for talks with Kim Jong Il, and returned with a signed agreement to open hundreds of factories employing as many as to 700,000 North Korean workers in and around the ancient Koryŏ capital of Kaesŏng, a city bisected by the 38th parallel but firmly in the DPRK since the war ended. Many South Korean firms are now operating in the Kaesŏng complex.

From the mid-1990s onward, of course, North Korea faced extraordinary disasters and near extinction as its economy basically collapsed—resulting in a famine that killed at least 600,000 people and an apparently bottomless requirement for external aid. By 1998 when Kim Dae Jung was inaugurated, however, nearly a decade had passed since the Berlin Wall fell, and so one had to assume that North Korea was not going to collapse and would be around for some time to come. Thus Kim Dae Jung pledged his government to peaceful coexistence, and to refrain from trying to provoke a North Korean collapse or to "absorb" the North, on the German model of unification. These are the critically-important points in all of Kim Dae Jung's strategy, in my view, and explain why North Korea had the confidence finally to decide upon its own new diplomacy. It had not collapsed, had not disappeared, and as the South pledged itself to live amicably with the North for at least another generation (without expecting a quick unification), the U.S. came to understand that it would have to deal with North Korea as it exists, rather than hoping that it would somehow go away.

There was another deeply serious element in the non-collapse of North Korea, because Pyongyang's leaders warned many times that for the world to hope for its collapse was to hope for the next Korean War. Perhaps the most dramatic statement came in March 1996, on the heels of CIA Director John Deutch's testimony in Congress that it was not a question of whether North Korea would collapse, but only a question of when. Within forty-eight hours Vice-Marshal Kim Kwang Jin retorted, "the point now is not whether a war will break out in the Korean peninsula … but when it will be unleashed."

A New American Policy—To Save the Alliance?

In the fall of 1998 the State Department began a six-month-long review of Korea policy which markedly changed the direction of U.S. strategy and culminated in the June 1999 Perry mission to Pyongyang. Ambassador William Perry issued a public version of this review in October 1999, the essence of which was a policy of engagement predicated on the co-existence of two Koreas for another considerable period of time, a progressive lifting of the American embargo against the North, pledges not to threaten the North, and a deepening of diplomatic relations.

The American civil-war-deterrent structure provided the unspoken *realpolitik* basis for the changes of policy in Seoul and Washington. The Clinton administration wanted to keep U.S. troops in Korea for the long term (and even after unification according to Defense Secretary William Cohen's statement in June 1998), which was mildly surprising given the end of the Cold War so many years before, but much less surprising than North Korea's acquiescence and even support for that same strategy. U.S. troops would continue to be a general stabilizer for Northeast Asia, maintaining American involvement and a balance of power with Japan and China. Meanwhile *both* Korean leaders wanted them to stay because they are the guarantor of peaceful coexistence—that the South will not be attacked and the North will not be swallowed or absorbed by the South, resulting in a kind of "Hong Kong" solution to the border (or DMZ) problem in Korea—as reconciliation between the two Koreas ensued, American troops would help police and supervise the increasingly permeable DMZ border, and assure stability on the peninsula. More than a decade ago North Koreans began telling Americans privately that U.S. troops could remain in the South to help Koreans deal with a strong Japan and a rising China, but also to protect the DPRK against absorption by the South. During the June 2000 summit, Kim Jong Il said essentially the same thing directly to Kim Dae Jung.

In this sense the changes in the Korean situation initiated by Kim Dae Jung at his inauguration in 1998 and later sustained by major changes in American and North Korean policy, represented the first genuine attempt to achieve peace, reconciliation, and a final end to the Korean War *within* the existing post-1945 Northeast Asian security structures forged by the United States. U.S. troops would remain in the South for the foreseeable future, two Korean states would remain and coexist, American might would still keep one side from trying to overcome the other, and North Korea would accede to this strategy because of its survival needs, its morbid fears about its own security, and because of the proximity of Japan and China, which are both strong nations at the same time—for the first time in modern history.

The success of this strategy required that the U.S. transform its role from being the coach, cheerleader, and often the quarterback of the southern side, to being an honest broker in bringing the two Koreas together (or keeping them apart, as the case may be). Until the Bush administration came in, that strategy did not seem difficult because the Pentagon wants to stay in Korea—forever, it would seem. The continuing American commitment to Korea is, moreover, still just one aspect of the American strategic position in East Asia and the Pacific: Japan also remains within the postwar settlement hammered out in 1947-53, and shows no signs of getting out of it, Okinawan protests and nationalist stirrings to the contrary. The "Nye Doctrine" of 1995 projected two more decades of stationing around 100,000 troops in Japan and Korea, and U.S. strategy now places no end point on how long the troops will stay in the region. In recent years the Pentagon has raised its guard against a new challenger for control of Pacific security; Pentagon annual reports do not name that "challenger," but recent events—like the warming of relations with Vietnam, India, and North Korea (until 2001), rumors that the U.S. might defend Taiwan against a mainland attack, and a string of new U.S. bases in central Asia post-9/11—have led many Chinese to see a growing American encirclement of China. Other nations in East and Southeast Asia, however, do not voice much dissatisfaction with this outcome. In this light, a pacified Korean peninsula in which the two states coexist, if not a unified Korea, fits the logic of

American strategy in Asia for the first time since—well, since Dean Rusk first drew a line at the 38th parallel 61 years ago.

The Clinton administration may or may not have understood all this, but it did commit itself to normalize relations with the North, to keep its plutonium program frozen, and to indirectly buy out its missiles. Who remembers that Madame Albright deplaned in Pyongyang on October 23, 2000 wearing a heliotropic violet dress with matching floppy hat, or that she proclaimed the Dear Leader to be rational, if not quite normal? ("He is amazingly well-informed and extremely well-read," one American in the entourage said; "he is practical, thoughtful, listened very hard. He was making notes. He has a sense of humor. He's not the madman a lot of people portrayed him as"[9]). The missile agreement was the result of painstaking efforts by a State Department team led by former Defense Secretary William Perry, Under-Secretary Wendy Sherman, and middle-level officials who had patiently found ways to coax the North Koreans into various agreements over the preceding decade—all the while braving a hailstorm of rightwing Republican calumny, character assassination, and distorted and hysterical charges, most often voiced in the Moonies' *Washington Times*. As Perry put it, his team would seek "the complete and verifiable cessation of testing, production, and deployment of missiles exceeding the parameters of the Missile Technology Control Regime [MTCR], and the complete cessation of export sales of such missiles."[10]

Secretary of State Albright had this deal nailed down by November, except that the North agreed to give up only its medium and long-range missiles, but would not agree to enter the MCTR unless President Clinton met Kim Jong Il in a summit in Pyongyang. Had the North entered the MTCR, all North Korean missiles above a range of 180 miles would have been eliminated, thus removing a threat felt deeply in nearby Japan. In return the U.S. would have provided some $1 billion in food aid to the regime, for an undetermined number of years.[11] In other words getting North Korea into the MTCR would cost $1 billion annually and a summit meeting between the American President and Kim Jong Il; National Missile Defense, for which North Korea was Don Rumsfeld's poster boy before September 11th, had already cost the U.S. taxpayer $60 billion. President Clinton wanted to go to Pyongyang, indeed his negotiators on Korea had their bags packed for weeks in November 2000—but as Clinton's National Security advisor Sandy Berger later put it, it wasn't a good idea for the President to leave the country in November when they didn't know "whether there could be a major constitutional crisis."[12] After the Supreme Court stepped in to give the 2000 presidential election to George W. Bush, it was too late.

Saber-Rattling Inertia: The Policies of the Bush Administration

The Bush administration tipped the hand of its Korea policy within weeks of the inauguration: on March 6, 2001 Secretary of State Colin Powell told reporters that the administration would "pick up where President Clinton and his administration left off," and a day later President Bush contradicted him, saying he did not trust Kim Jong Il. Since that early point this administration has had no coherent Korea policy and accordingly, has achieved exactly nothing—except perhaps an arsenal of North Korean nuclear weapons. Twelve advisors get in a room and bicker over engaging or overthrowing the Pyongyang regime, and the President does not assert himself to hammer out a consensus. Here is how you achieve the worst of all worlds, in five easy lessons:

(1) After James Kelly's October 2002 visit a long period ensued in which Bush adopted a strategy of refusing to talk to the North about anything except how it would go about dismantling its nuclear program--and refused bilateral talks even for this purpose. It offered no incentives in return, thus achieving the petrified immobilism that arises when one party is asked to give up everything and the other party, nothing—including

its preemptive war doctrine, targeted on North Korea among others and released a few weeks before Kelly's visit.

(2) In 2003 Bush acquiesced to Chinese demands for six-party talks, but did not make a positive proposal until the summer of 2004. By that time the North was waiting to see how the 2004 election came out. Today the talks are indefinitely suspended.

(3) While pursuing confrontation (Kelly) and diplomacy (the 6-party talks) senior Bush administration officials have openly called for—and planned for—the forcible overthrow of the North Korean regime.

(4) Regime change seems to be the preferred policy of the Bush administration, but the policy has lost all credibility because (a) we tried that once and failed (in 1950) and (b) Bush is completely bogged down in Iraq and couldn't spare 10,000 soldiers to fight in Korea, whereas the war plan calls for 500,000.

(5) This sputtering inertia has strained relations with South Korea to the breaking point, and endangered the alliance in a way unheard of since 1953.

Regime change was the preferred North Korea strategy of central members of the neo-conservative "Vulcan Group." When a reporter from the *New York Times* asked John Bolton what the Bush policy was toward the North, "he strode over to a bookshelf, pulled off a volume and slapped it on the table. It was called 'The End of North Korea,' by an American Enterprise Institute colleague. "That,' he said, 'is our policy.'"[13] It appears to be the President's policy, too. Over the years Bush has denounced Kim Jong Il as an untrustworthy madman, a "pygmy," an "evildoer," and in a discussion with Bob Woodward, he blurted out "I loathe Kim Jong Il!," shouting and "waving his finger in the air." In a less-noticed part of this outburst, Bush declared his preference for "toppling" the North Korean regime.[14] Probably Dick Cheney is the leading advocate of overthrowing the North, but Don Rumsfeld has done more to put the strategy into effect.

Bush's preemptive doctrine arrived in September 2002 atop longstanding U.S. war plans to use nuclear weapons in the earliest stages of a new Korean War. The new doctrine conflated existing plans for nuclear preemption in an invasion initiated by the North, which have been standard operating procedure for the U.S. military for decades, with the apparent determination to attack states like North Korea simply because they have or would like to have nuclear weapons like those that the U.S. still amasses by the thousands. Donald Rumsfeld raised things to a new pitch in the spring of 2003 by demanding revisions in the basic war plan for Korea ("Operations Plan 5030"). Unnamed senior Bush administration officials considered elements of this new plan "so aggressive that they could provoke a war." The basic strategy, according to insiders who had read the plan, was "to topple Kim's regime by destabilizing its military forces," so they would overthrow him and accomplish a "regime change." The plan was pushed "by many of the same administration hard-liners who advocated regime change in Iraq." Short of trying to force a military coup, Rumsfeld and company wanted the U.S. military to "stage a weeks-long surprise military exercise, designed to force North Koreans to head for bunkers and deplete valuable stores of food, water, and other resources."[15] This is how the 1950 invasion began: North Korea announced a long summer military exercise along the 38th parallel, mobilizing some 50,000 troops. Once the war games started, several divisions suddenly veered south and took Seoul in three days; only a tiny handful of the highest officials knew that the summer exercises were prelude to a blitzkreig.

Larry Niksch, a long-time specialist on Asian Affairs at the Congressional Research Service and a person never given to leaps toward unfounded conclusions, cited Rumsfeld's new war plan in writing in the summer of 2003 that "regime change in North Korea is indeed the Bush administration's policy objective." If recent, sporadically-applied sanctions against the DPRK and interdiction of its shipping do not produce a regime change or "diplomatic capitulation," then Rumsfeld planned to escalate from a preemptive strike against Yongbyon to "a broader plan of

massive strikes against multiple targets." All of this was avidly read in South Korea and generally ignored in the U.S.. It caused near panic in President Roh's circle, and a deep estrangement between the Korean and the American military. A close advisor to Roh told Bush administration officials that if the U.S. attacked the North over South Korean objections, it would destroy the alliance with the South. When I visited Seoul in August 2003 a prominent official told me that relations between the two militaries had never been worse. These difficulties were aggravated by Rumsfeld deciding to move 9,000 soldiers from Korea to Iraq, with the barest consultation, and to unilaterally decide that the huge American base at Yongsan would be moved well south of the Han River.

Since the Iraq war bogged down such talk has been rare, but the indecision and inertia of U.S. policy have continued. After apparently giving Christopher Hill the green light last summer to make new approaches to the North at the 6-party talks, hard-liners including Robert Joseph (Bolton's replacement at the State Department) proceeded to undermine Hill's efforts by publicly calling the DPRK "a criminal state" and thinking up new punishments for its involvement in peddling opium and counterfeit U.S. dollars—even though no poppy fields have ever been spotted in the North, and its counterfeiting comes to piddling amounts (a reported $45 million last year, compared to the $17 to $40 billion the U.S. spends annually for Korean security) that should not be allowed to stand in the way of negotiating an end to the North's nuclear programs. In early 2006 it seems likely that the North will choose to wait out the current stalemate with an increasingly unpopular lame-duck president, and see who wins in 2008.

The inertia of the past five years has not been without serious cost to the alliance. Since 2001 South Korea has ranked near the top of countries distinguished by their anti-American attitudes. Findings of the Pew Research Center show both a recent rise in anti-American views, and the policy-related basis of most of those views: much of this is actually *anti-Bushism* rather than anti-Americanism; it is very different from the violent and across-the-board anti-Americanism of the 1980s. It is not a partisan comment but a fact to say that almost all of the growth in anti-Americanism has come about because of (1) an abrupt shift in Washington's policies toward the North, (2) continuity in South Korean policies from 1998 to the present, and (3) fears that South Korea could be drawn into a new war with the North—or over Taiwan.

In the 1990s nearly 70% of Koreans polled held favorable views of the U.S., and only about 15% were clearly negative. In 2001 a Potomac Associates study found that 59% of Koreans were positive (47%) or very positive (12%) toward the U.S., 31% were neither positive nor negative, only 10% were "somewhat negative," and none were "very negative." This orientation underwent "a sea change" in subsequent months and a polarization, according to William Watts of Potomac Associates, as 53% remained somewhat or very favorable, but 43% became somewhat or very unfavorable. Among Koreans in their twenties a mere 22% were somewhat or very favorable, and fully 76% were somewhat or very unfavorable; this was the only age group in which a majority (66%) wanted U.S. troops to withdraw from Korea. (The latter figures come from Pew and Gallup, not from Potomac Associates.) In late 2002 Gallup Korea showed a majority negative view of the U.S. across all classes and ages of Koreans, and dramatically lowered levels of trust in the U.S.A. Nonetheless, the U.S. was still trusted much more than Japan, China, or Russia.[16]

The Pew Global Attitudes Survey found in May 2003 that 50% of Koreans held an unfavorable view of the U.S., but among younger groups, fully 71% of those aged 18-29 had unfavorable views. Surprisingly, the 30-49 age group—mostly educated in the 1980s—was nearly split between favorable and unfavorable views; this might be considered an improvement, given the deep anti-Americanism of many students in the '80s. More surprising, Pew determined that among those who had unfavorable views of the U.S., fully 72% expressed "general hostility toward America" rather than opposition to American policies. This may suggest a hardening of negative attitudes over time, or it may be a mere blip. Koreans also showed markedly less worry about the North Korean threat—less so than Americans, Canadians, and Europeans. Of course, Korea may be no different from other American allies and friends: Germany fell from 78% to

61% to 45% during the same period, France went from 62% to 63% to 43%, and Turkey collapsed from 52% to 30% to 15%.[17] But that fact should not hearten anyone.

Conclusions

The agreements worked out by Kim Dae Jung and the Clinton administration heralded a major change in the Korean-American relationship, a way to preserve the alliance while changing the basic relationships between North and South, and between the U.S. and the North. Since Seoul has continued to pursue engagement and the North has continued to call for normalization of relations with Washington, it is possible that a new administration in Washington could go back to this future, which seems so deeply to be in the mutual interest of both Koreas and the U.S.. This "future" could include not only getting rid of Pyongyang's nuclear and missile forces in the context of normalization, but mutual force reductions along the DMZ, an end to American operational control of ROK armed forces (perhaps through what Selig Harrison calls a "co-equal" command structure like that in Japan[18]), and a final end to the Korean War via a quadripartite peace agreement.

Still, these policies represent a second-best solution to the Korean problem because they do not address how the peninsula might be reunified, or when American troops might finally terminate their 61-year-old commitment to Korea. The new policies had the virtue of being founded on the realities of the peninsula over the past half-century and protecting the security interests of all parties, but they put off reunification until the next generation (and can easily be reversed). The worst solution, however, is the one we have been moving toward since 2001: a nuclear-armed North Korea, which may well provoke Japan and/or the ROK to go nuclear, and thus break the very structure of American security in Northeast Asia fashioned so long ago, in the time of Dean Rusk and Dean Acheson. And if we get five more years like the last five, the Korean people may just decide to demand that American forces go home.

Notes

[1] Leslie Gelb, "The Next Renegade State," Op-Ed Page, *New York Times* (April 10, 1991).
[2] Nicholas Kristof, "The Greatest Danger," Op-Ed Page, *New York Times* (October 29, 2002). He quotes Kim Myong Chul, whom I first met 25 years ago; within 30 minutes I had decided that nothing he said could be trusted.
[3] Thomas E. Ricks and Glenn Kessler, "U.S., N. Korea Drifting Toward War, Perry Warns," *Washington Post* (July 15, 2003) p. A14.
[4] As the U.S. Ambassador to Korea John Muccio put it in November 1949, the problem was in getting sufficient military assistance "to enable the Koreans to defend this area and at the same time keep them from getting over-eager on moving North." Later he remarked bluntly, "We were in a very difficult position, a very subtle position, because if we gave Rhee and his cohorts what they wanted, they could have started to move north the same as the North started to move south. And the onus would have been on us...." State Department 895.00 file, box 946, Muccio to Butterworth, Nov. 1, 1949; Truman Library, Muccio oral history interview no. 177, Dec. 27, 1973. On several occasions before June 1950 Acheson also spoke directly to the azards of giving offensive weaponry like tanks and an air force to the South.
[5] The Nautilus Institute has several declassified Pentagon studies from the mid-1970s on its website which estimated that North Korea would win a war with the South if neither side had foreign backing. As late as 1992, one Pentagon war game showed North Korea winning against combined U.S.-ROK forces. With North Korea's debilitation over the past decade, either eventuality is highly unlikely today.
[6] In 1953 Syngman Rhee had opposed any armistice settlement, refused to sign the agreement when it was made, and frequently threatened to reopen the war. In November 1953 Vice-President Nixon visited Korea "and sought to extract written assurances from President Rhee 'that he is not going to start the war up again on the gamble that he can get us involved in his effort to unite Korea by force.'" He got no such written assurance, but in the absence of it the American commander was directed, in a highly secret "annex" circulated only to a few American leaders, to secure "prompt warning of any decision by Rhee to order an attack" and to prevent its issuance or receipt by ROKA field commanders. But well into the late 1950s, in NSC discussions American leaders voiced concern that the South or the North might reignite the war, and John Foster Dulles also said it might well be impossible to determine which side had started a new conflict.

After six months of NSC and other discussions in 1956-57, Dulles finally came to agree with the Joint Chiefs of Staff that nuclear weapons should be sent to Korea, and from his point of view this was an American-controlled deterrent that render any new war highly unlikely. However a sub-paragraph in the armistice agreement (section 13d) restricted both sides from introducing new types of weapons into the Korean theater. Admiral Radford simply wanted unilaterally to suspend 13d, since in his view it could not be "interpreted" to allow nuclear weapons. Dulles, however, conditioned his support of the JCS proposal on the provision of "publishable evidence confirming Communist violations of the armistice sufficient to justify such action to our Allies and before the UN." The problem was that the "publishable evidence" was not satisfactory, because the Communist side had not seriously violated section 13d. It had introduced new jet aircraft, but so had the U.S., and neither innovation was considered a radical upgrading of capabilities. Nuclear weapons were quite a different matter. This point bothered Dulles, the State Department and the British, but the U.S. went ahead in spite of their worries and in June 1957, relieved itself of its 13d obligations. (Donald Stone Macdonald, *U.S.-Korean Relations from Liberation to Self-Reliance, The Twenty-Year Record: An Interpretive Summary of the Archives of the U.S. Department of State for the Period 1945 to 1965* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 18-20, 23, 78-79.)
[7] On July 8, 1996, the International Court of Justice at the Hague stated that the use or threat of nuclear weapons should be outlawed as "the ultimate evil." It could not decide, however, whether the use of nuclear weapons for self-defense was justified: "The Court cannot conclude definitively whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in an extreme circumstance of self-defense, in which the very survival of a state would be at stake"(New York Times, July 9, 1996). By this standard, North Korea is more justified in developing nuclear weapons, than the U.S. is in threatening a non-nuclear North Korea with nuclear annihilation.
[8] Ambassador William Perry made an unusual statement in September 1999, in which he acknowledged that North Korean missiles were intended to deter the threat of American missiles. North Korea's 3-stage missile does not have enough lift capacity to carry a nuclear warhead, nor does the North apparently have the technology either to lighten missile throw-weight (for example by using aluminum alloys) or to

manufacture a sufficiently small nuclear warhead (which would require high-speed X-ray cameras that the North does not have); even if a much lighter chemical or biological warhead were installed, it is unclear that its first stage has enough thrust even to lift that payload fast enough and far enough to reach the U.S.; this missile's telemetry was rudimentary, meaning that its targeting cannot be reliably controlled after it reaches its apogee, leading to a circular-error-probable of as much as 3 miles; North Korea does not appear to have heat-resistant technologies that would keep the warhead from burning up upon re-entry into the atmosphere; finally its missile "base" is so rudimentary that American scientists found "this modest and underwhelming facility … barely worthy of note, consisting of the most minimal imaginable test infrastructure." See Selig Harrison, "The Missiles of North Korea: How Real a Threat?", World Policy Journal, vol. XVII, No. 3 (Fall 2000), pp. 13-24.

[9] Doug Struck and Steven Mufson, "North Korea's Kim Sheds Image of 'Madman,'" *The Washington Post* (October 26, 2001), p. A-1.

[10] This is from the public version of Perry's report to the President, submitted in mid-October 1999.

[11] See Michael R. Gordon's investigative report, "How Politics Sank Accord on Missiles with North Korea," *New York Times* (March 6, 2001), pp. A-1, A-8. It so happened that I had lunch with William Perry a few days after this article appeared, and he confirmed it in every detail.

[12] Quoted in Gordon, *New York Times*, March 6, 2001, p. A-8.

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), p. 340. In typically convoluted syntax, Bush referred to what would happen "if we try to—if this guy were to topple." Some people thought the "financial burdens" of such an outcome would be too onerous, but not the President: "I just don't buy that. Either you believe in freedom, and want to—and worry about the human condition, or you don't."

[15] Bruce B. Auster and Kevin Whitelaw, "Pentagon Plan 5030, A New Blueprint for Facing Down North Korea," *U.S. News and World Report* (July 21, 2003).

[16] William Watts in Steinberg, pp. 268-72.

[17] Pew Global Attitudes Project, www.pewglobal.org/commentary/display.php?AnalysisID=67.

[18] Selig Harrison, "South Korea—U.S. Alliance Under the Roh Government," April 11, 2006, www.nutilus.org/fora/secuirty/0628Harrison.html.