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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.**

**Demystifying the U.S.-ROK Command and Control Structure: How “OPCON Transfer”  
Can Advance the Unity of Effort on the Korean Peninsula**

**Chad Nishizuka**

**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**4 May 2018**

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## **TIME TO UNIFY EFFORTS IN SOUTH KOREA**

The thawing of tensions on the Korean peninsula associated with the historic peace treaty agreement between North Korean Dictator, Kim Jong-un, and South Korean President, Moon Jae-in, offer hope for a denuclearized North Korea. Despite these positive steps toward peace between the two Koreas, prudence and North Korea's long history of bellicose behavior strongly suggest that Washington and Seoul should remain postured to defend South Korea. Perhaps the most significant vulnerability in defense of South Korea is the complex U.S.-ROK command and control (C2) structure. Because of the existence of four distinct theater-level commands within Korea, the U.S. military and ROK Armed Forces lack a truly unified command structure, a glaring defect in the defenses of the peninsula. To create a streamlined C2 process and increased operational efficiency and effectiveness, the United States and South Korea should expedite the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON)<sup>1</sup> through the restructuring of the Combined Forces Command (CFC) and work towards the termination of the Armistice Agreement, in the event of a failed peace treaty. The U.S. should accomplish this by applying several time-tested principles of C2—simplicity, the unity of command, and span of control—enabling the combined U.S.-ROK entity to become a more formidable force.

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<sup>1</sup> For clarification, the phrase “transfer of wartime OPCON” is a misnomer and is primarily used by the ROK Government to present a particular perception to its citizens. President Moon and the ROK are actually advocating for the top leadership position in the Combined Forces Command (CFC), the US-ROK bilateral command. Since its inception in November 1978, an American four-star general has led the CFC. The CFC is the primary entity responsible for deterrence and the defense of South Korea, accomplishable only through the transferal of OPCON of military troops from both the US and the ROK in times of crisis. Shawn Creamer, *Theater-level Command and Alliance Decision-Making Architecture in Korea* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2016), 1.

## THE ROAD TO COMPLEXITY

Complicating the C2 structure in South Korea is the coexistence of four distinct theater-level commands, each with a unique command structure and set of objectives. The command and control environment that exists between the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), United States Forces Korea (USFK), Combined Forces Command (CFC), and the United Nations Command (UNC) is unwieldy and complicated. Not surprisingly, U.S. and ROK military and civilian leaders often misinterpret the command relationships on the peninsula [Figure 1], creating confusion and inefficiency. The 1953 Armistice Agreement, which terminated all military action on the Korean Peninsula, started the road to complexity. The terms of the Armistice were to be upheld by the UNC-erected Military Armistice Commission (MAC). Shortly after the signing of the Armistice Agreement, the U.S. and ROK signed the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) on October 1, 1953. From October 1953 until November 1978, the United States used the UNC as its primary means of obtaining operational control of multi-national forces to defend the sovereignty of South Korea. By 1978, the bilateral U.S.-ROK relationship had evolved from one of dependence to a mutual partnership. As a result, the two Allies formally established an integrated defense command, the U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC), to adopt the defense of Korea mission from the UNC. The most significant change that emerged from the newly launched CFC was the switch from a unilateral U.S. decision-making process to a bilateral U.S.-ROK one. Also complicating the C2 environment was the ROK Government's transfer of OPCON from the UNC to the CFC. This passage of OPCON created a dichotomy; the UNC had the responsibility to enforce the Armistice but lacked the authority to do so.<sup>2</sup> The UNC and CFC

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<sup>2</sup> Shawn Creamer, *Answering the Korea Question: U.S. Government Policy toward the Unified Command and the Korean Armistice Agreement* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2017), 18-19.

continue to coexist today, with the UNC responsible for friendly compliance to the Armistice Agreement and the CFC accountable for deterrence and defense missions. The U.S. solution to the issue of OPCON was to have a single four-star general command both the UNC and the CFC. However, this job now had two competing imperatives, contesting any belligerent who threatens to breach the terms of Armistice and simultaneously fostering a stronger more capable US-ROK force, violating the C2 principle of unity of effort at the highest levels of command.<sup>3</sup>

In 1994, a new level of complication was added to the U.S.-ROK C2 issue when Seoul withdrew peacetime OPCON over its armed forces from the CFC and retained it under a ROK unilateral command, the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Consequently, the ROK JCS became the entity responsible for the deterrence and initial defense of Korea during Armistice (peace-time) and early crisis periods. However, the CFC maintained its status as the body responsible for the protection of the ROK during hostilities requiring the combined force. To sustain applicable span of control and preserve combined force response capabilities, the CFC needed a formal linkage to the ROK Armed Forces during Armistice to verify their operational state of readiness. To fulfill this role, the ROK created yet another new entity, the CFC Combined Delegated Authority (CODA).<sup>4</sup> This 1994 U.S.-ROK command and control structure has endured until today, with two distinct chains of command, one during Armistice and one during episodes of conflict. Seoul has expressed its interest in occupying the top leadership position in the CFC since 2006 but has postponed the transition twice, in 2010 and 2014, due to its assessed inability to fulfill the duties and responsibilities that the change would demand.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 21-23.

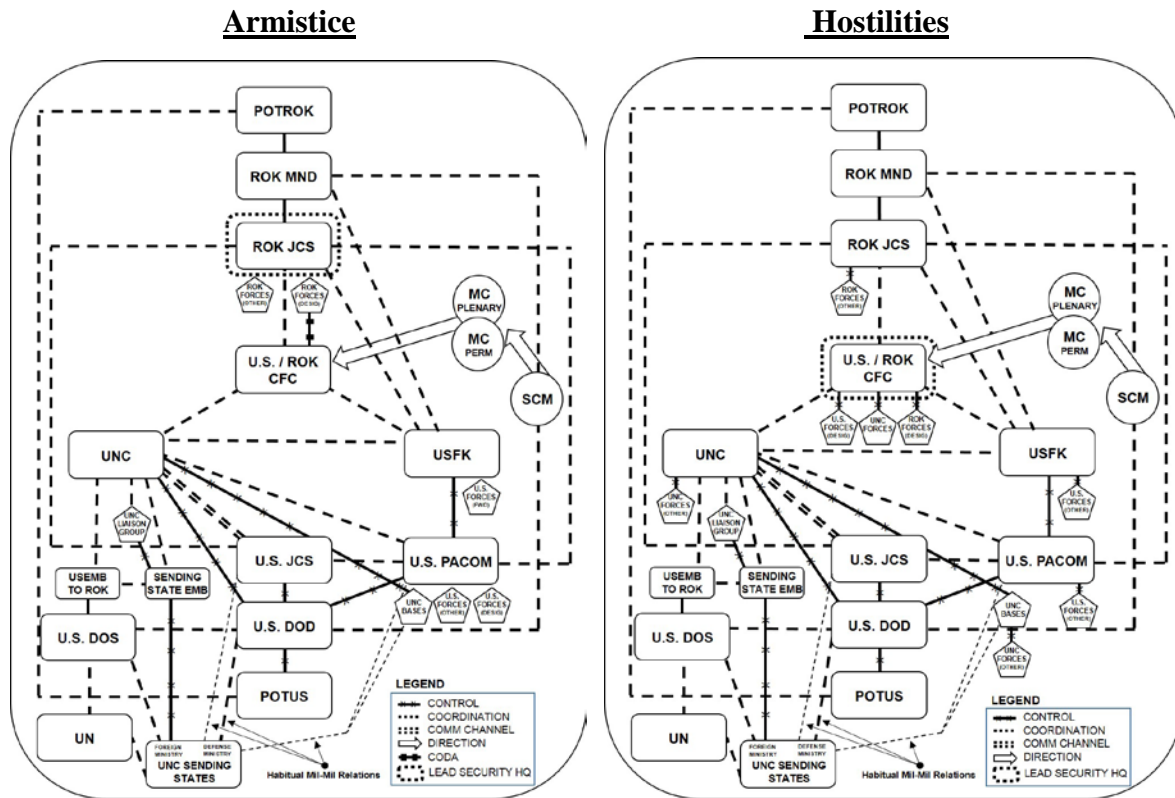
<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

As the ROK continues to grow stronger, both economically and politically, the four theater-level commands in South Korea are experiencing increasing difficulties synchronizing competing government policies. As democratic nations, U.S. and Korean policies are shaped by their domestic populations' expectations and influenced by changes in the security environment. The U.S. and ROK governments' aptitude to address policy differences have a direct impact on the ability of the four commands to achieve their end-states, individually or as a cohesive unit. Political non-alignment in conjunction with a complicated command and control environment has the potential to create tension between the ROK JCS, UNC, and USFK, leading to the paralysis of the CFC in developing a response to threats against South Korea.<sup>5</sup> To simplify this political relationship and the operational C2 environment, the U.S. and ROK must address the current structure of the CFC in parallel with the U.S. Government's termination of the obsolete Armistice Agreement and leave the issue of a final peace settlement between the ROK and the DPRK.

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<sup>5</sup> Creamer, *Theater-level Command and Alliance Decision-Making Architecture in Korea*, 2.





**Figure 1: The Complexity of Theater Command Relationships<sup>6</sup>**

### OUT OF CHAOS, FIND SIMPLICITY

If not addressed, the lack of simplicity in the U.S.-ROK command and control framework may inevitably lead to chaos and confusion during an escalation of hostilities against South Korea. The foremost principle of C2, in which all other principles are nested, is simplicity.<sup>7</sup>—the graphic above amply demonstrates that the US-ROK arrangement is anything but simple. Simplification of command organizations can expedite the flow of information during both peacetime and contingency operations. It is not difficult to comprehend how four distinct theater-level commands in an area of operations (AO) one-seventh the size of Texas can create a complex and ambiguous network of inter-

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 3-4.

<sup>7</sup> *JP-1: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017), IV-2.

organizational relationships. The physical space limitations on the Korean Peninsula have influenced the U.S. Government's (USG) decision to reduce its footprint in South Korea. The U.S. reduction in force is solved by assigning multiple positions across all three U.S.-led organizations (USFK, CFC, and UNC) to a single individual, "multi-hatting" these military members. The Senior U.S. Military Officer assigned to Korea (SUSMOAK) is one of these individuals, "triple-hatted" as the Commander of USFK, CFC, and UNC.<sup>8</sup> While the practice of "multi-hatting" may aid in reducing the U.S. footprint on the peninsula and the easing of resource allocations, the system directly contributes to the confusion about the four theater-level commands' authorities, responsibilities, and equities. In regards to confusion, Clausewitz warns us, "Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult. The difficulties accumulate and end by producing a kind of friction that is inconceivable unless one has experienced war."<sup>9</sup> In a conflict, the complex nature of the C2 environment brought about by the existence of four theater-level commands will intensify the friction that is already inherent in war. A C2 structure that is difficult to comprehend in the peacetime environment will likely become more difficult to grasp during a fight.

The inability of the U.S. and ROK to simplify the current wartime C2 structure could lead to the Alliance's failure and defeat. History is replete with such lessons. In 1914, the Germans lacked a well-defined and straightforward command organization in the higher echelons of their armed forces. Throughout the war, the absence of a simple command structure prevented effective communication between the general staff and admiralty. As a result, the German joint effort to seize the French Channel coast with its army, supported by naval sea-to-land fires, failed to achieve the unity of effort required for success due to an ill-

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 119.

defined command structure.<sup>10</sup> Along similar lines, the transition in the CFC leadership, from American-led to South Korean-led, would simplify the command relationships within the organization by clearly identifying the ROK forces as the supported asset and the U.S. forces as the supporting asset in defense of Korea. This subordinate U.S. position in the C2 structure is similar to the command relationship used by United States Forces Japan (USFJ). To ensure Japan's peace and security across all domains, the Japanese Self-Defense Force (SDF) retains primary responsibility for fulfilling the security role. Concurrently, Japan's "National Defense Strategy," identifies USFJ as the entity responsible for supporting and supplementing SDF operations.<sup>11</sup> Implementing defined roles in the U.S.-ROK relationship would almost certainly help expedite the decision-making process. Currently, the Commander of the CFC remains under the direct guidance of both ROK and U.S. political and military leaders in a consultative manner. He receives strategic guidance from both the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and the secretary of defense as well as the ROK JCS and their minister of defense.<sup>12</sup> In wartime, this sort of consultative relationship in the C2 structure can bog down the decision-making process, violating the "timely decision-making" element of the tenets of C2. Additionally, the current arrangement creates confusion on whose opinion holds higher value; that of the U.S., which retains wartime OPCON, or that of the ROK, which is the supported force. This scenario violates several C2 tenets such as defined authorities, roles and relationships; responsible, dependable, and interoperable support systems; coordination mechanisms; and mutual trust. The permanent transfer of OPCON to

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<sup>10</sup> Milan Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare Theory and Practice* (US Naval War College, 2009), VIII-13.

<sup>11</sup> *Defense of Japan 2017*, (Ministry of Defense, 2017), 268-269.

<sup>12</sup> Clint Work, "The Long History of South Korea's OPCON Debate," Nov 1, 2017. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/the-long-history-of-south-koreas-opcon-debate/>

South Korea via the restructuring of the CFC would instantly remove this dilemma, as a clear delineation of the supported versus the supporting roles would be well-defined.

To further simplify the U.S.-ROK C2 relationship, the United States should terminate the obsolete Armistice Agreement and remove the requirement to have a separate United Nations Command. Besides streamlining theater C2 through the direct removal of one of the four theater-level commands, the termination of the Armistice Agreement would immediately remove the U.S. as a barrier to inter-Korea relations, putting the obligation of a final peace settlement directly on the ROK and DPRK. The termination of the agreement will also help Washington to shift its resources and focus from the dissolved UNC to the U.S.-ROK bilateral relationship as an MDT partner.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, if adopted, the transition in the CFC to ROK leadership would create a dichotomy between the newly formed ROK-led defense arrangement and a USG-dominated cease fire mechanism, potentially creating a significant rift in the U.S.-ROK relationship.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, a termination of the Armistice Agreement should occur in parallel with the reorganization of the CFC, to prevent future disagreements between the U.S.-led UNC and the ROK-led CFC that could place the U.S.-ROK relationship in jeopardy. The simultaneous efforts to reorganize the CFC and eradicate the UNC via the U.S. cessation of the Armistice Agreement could assist in simplifying the current U.S.-ROK C2 structure. These efforts would reduce the proliferation of the practice of multi-hatting while providing a clear delineation between the roles of the ROK JCS and the USFK. The simplification of the U.S.-ROK C2 process will increase force efficiency and effectiveness by fostering the unity of command.

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<sup>13</sup> Creamer, *Answering the Korea Question: U.S. Government Policy toward the Unified Command and the Korean Armistice Agreement*, 64-69.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

## FOSTERING UNITY OF COMMAND

By simplifying its C2 structure, the U.S.-ROK entity may increase unity of effort through a well-defined unity of command. Maintenance of an unambiguous chain of command, well-defined command relationships, and clear delineations of responsibilities and authorities all contribute to the unity of command.<sup>15</sup> Having a single operational commander responsible for planning, preparation, and execution of any major operation or campaign would by definition lead to a force multiplying unity of effort. If the command is artificially divided because of unclear demarcations in responsibility—synergizing intelligence, logistics, and protection become increasingly difficult.<sup>16</sup> As previously mentioned, the existence of four theater-level commands is the primary factor creating complexity in the U.S.-ROK C2 relationship, directly impacting unity of command. Recalling the example of the SUSMOAK, his multi-hatted command responsibilities generate many scenarios in which his duties and authorities acting in one capacity are in direct conflict with his duties in another. As the USFK Commander, supporting the American government's decisions, the SUSMOAK may be asked to disassociate the U.S. from a particular North-South crisis. However, this would be in direct conflict with his responsibilities as the Commander of the CFC, to support the interests of the bilateral U.S.-ROK Military Committee in defense of South Korea. Additionally, as the Commander of the UNC, the SUSMOAK is responsible for the de-escalation of engagements and the peaceful return to the terms of Armistice. The diverging responsibilities of the SUSMOAK to execute de-escalation measures while preparing for combat and non-combatant evacuation communicates different, polar-opposite

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<sup>15</sup> *JP-1: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, IV-2.

<sup>16</sup> Vego, APP-97.

messages to the enemy, complicates the bilateral relationship with the ROK and makes a unity of effort extremely difficult because of an unclear unity of command.<sup>17</sup>

It is in the best interests of both the U.S. and the ROK to address the issue of OPCON by restructuring the CFC to create unity of command through simplification. Throughout history, the lack of unity of command in war, more than any other factor, has been the cause of defeat. In the Seven Years' War, Frederick the Great, with an inferior force, defeated the allied French, Russian, and Austrian armies because the alliance was unable to unify its efforts to bring its overwhelmingly superior force to bare. The lack of unity of command made the anti-French coalition victory in the Battle of Leipzig in October 1813 more difficult than it should have been and almost led to the coalition's defeat. In the American Civil War, the absence of a single commander caused the Union armies in the field to operate independently for three years, between 1861 and 1864, leading to an enormous loss of blood and treasure. Unity of command was established in March 1864 when President Abraham Lincoln appointed General Ulysses S. Grant as the General-in-Chief of the Union armies, generating a unity of effort that enabled the Union to defeat the Confederacy a little more than a year later in April 1865.<sup>18</sup> These examples demonstrate the importance of unity of effort through the unity of command. Expediting the restructuring of the CFC and working towards the termination of the Armistice Agreement can help eliminate C2 confusion created by SUSMOAK multi-hatting and ensure the synchronization of future Allied efforts through the unity of command.

Because the mission of the CFC is to deter and defeat outside aggression against South Korea, it makes more sense that the Commander of the CFC is a ROK four-star

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<sup>17</sup> Creamer, *Theater-level Command and Alliance Decision-Making Architecture in Korea*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Vego, VIII-14.

general. The operational commander alone takes responsibility for making decisions. To do otherwise would violate the principle of unity of effort through the unity of command, and the result would be a lack of accountability for the decisions made, leading to half-measures and a lack of determination.<sup>19</sup> The operational objective provides the end-state guidance required to drive actions at the operational level of war. In the CFC, ROK priorities during peacetime and war should be the decisive factors used in the development of political and strategic objectives. If the CFC were to maintain its current structure in a conflict, the U.S. Commander of the CFC would be required to assess the intentions of the ROK JCS through the bilateral Military Committee and convert it into a combined operational strategy. If the ROK led the CFC, the decision-making processes would be one step shorter, ensuring ROK political leaders maintain maximum control of wartime objectives, and minimizing the potential of a U.S.-favored agenda getting carried out over that of the ROK JCS. U.S. agendas have the potential to become increasingly apparent in war, as war consists of surprises, fog, and friction. The only guarantees in war are change and uncertainty. In general, victory in war is gained by thinking and acting faster than the enemy and by making sound decisions quickly. Accurate, relevant, and timely information can significantly help the operational commander mentally outmaneuver his opponent.<sup>20</sup> In these situations, the expediency of decision-making is what will provide an advantage for the allied forces. In a U.S.-led CFC, the requirement to reach back to the Military Committee and the ROK JCS in the decision-making process would inevitably be too slow. During combat, a decision reached too late may well be as futile as one that fails to address the objective. Ideally, the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, X-64.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

operational commander should conduct a quick estimate of the situation, adopt a sound course of action, and execute it promptly and decisively.<sup>21</sup>

Unhindered decision-making is difficult with the current status of OPCON in South Korea. During a conflict, the requirement for the CFC Commander to get a unanimous decision from the Military Committee before making a wartime decision can lead to inaction and leave forces wanting for direction in the fog and friction of war. By placing the ROK at the helm of the CFC, the ROK becomes the supported partner with the U.S. supporting the fight based upon its political and military capabilities, remedying the current unity of command issue that slows down the decision-making process. A ROK-led CFC would also provide South Korea a greater span of control of its forces. For example, inaction by the U.S. in a conflict on the Korean Peninsula would not impede the ROK from taking military action if it assessed that it was a strategic necessity.

### **THE BENEFITS OF SPAN OF CONTROL**

The new CFC structure, through simplicity and unity of command, may provide the ROK a wider span of control over its forces. The span of control is the commander's desired reach of authority and direction over assigned or attached military personnel. The projected reach of command, brought about by a new CFC structure, has not been seen since the ROK JCS appropriated "peacetime OPCON" from the CFC in 1994. However, before that year, authority and control were held by the United States. The change in CFC leadership to a ROK representative may help transform the bilateral C2 structure from a tall organization with a narrow span of control to a flatter organization with a wide span of control.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, X-65.



Information in a tall-organizational structure, relative to a flat structure, must flow through extra levels of command. For example, in the current U.S.-ROK C2 structure, information from the bottom of the chain must flow through six levels of command: the force, the operational commander, the JCS, the CODA, the Military Committee, and the CFC Commander. In comparison, in a ROK-led CFC with a wide span of control, information would only need to travel through three levels of command: the force, the operational commander, and the CFC Commander. The current complex U.S.-ROK C2 structure provides the CFC a very narrow span of control, slowing down communication and hindering decision-making. Transitioning to a wide span of control results in the removal of multiple levels of the chain, due to the modifications in U.S.-ROK interaction brought about by a supported-supporting force relationship. This widened span of control has multiple benefits: it encourages delegation, creates agility and flexibility in force structure, improves the speed and quality of information throughout the chain of command, minimizes manpower requirements due to elimination of levels, and creates troop motivation as the system provides greater empowerment, autonomy, and self-direction at the lower levels of leadership.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to organizational structure, multiple factors, such as the number of subordinates, number of activities, emergent force capabilities, size and complexity of the operational area, and method used to control operations (centralized or decentralized), influence the span of control.<sup>23</sup> The span of control provides commanders the capability to adjust the size of the force based on the military requirements to achieve the operational

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<sup>22</sup> Joe Kolinger, "Importance of Span of Control & Organizational Structure," accessed April 9, 2018, <https://www.orgchartpro.com/span-of-control-and-organizational-structure/>

<sup>23</sup> JP 3-30: *Command and Control of Joint Air Operations* (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014), II-1.

objective. In modern-day warfare, the span of control is not about how far the commanders' influence can stretch, but rather how fluid and flexible they can be with their forces. A leadership transition within the CFC would allow the ROK to maintain full control of its military during peacetime, throughout the transitional period, and during the conflict, providing the maximum amount of flexibility to adjust the force relative to the limits of the fight. With a ROK-led CFC, there would be no requirement to "cut" troops to the bilateral organization because the forces would be attached to the CFC, no longer required to be held separately by the ROK JCS. With ROK forces attached to the CFC, it would be the organization's responsibility to ensure the force is appropriately equipped and trained. Therefore, such a change would ease decisions specific to force disposition and capabilities. As for span of control over U.S. troops, the termination of the Armistice Agreement would eliminate the U.S. requirement to man the UNC. Additionally, termination removes conflicts of interest that could have created operational incompatibility issues. As a result, American troops and capabilities available to support the CFC during contingency operations are greater in number, directly contributing to the strength of the U.S.-ROK entity.

### **OVERWHELMING RISK ASSOCIATED WITH OPCON TRANSFER**

Despite its benefits to simplicity, the unity of command, and span of control, some argue that a reorganization of the CFC, assigning a ROK four-star general as the commander, should be delayed indefinitely. Several factors have placed fears in the minds of U.S. leadership and have provided reasons to oppose the change to the leadership structure of the CFC. These reasons include difficulties with Alliance interoperability, U.S. hesitance supporting an integrated command structure without having the lead, South Korea's limited

military capabilities and experience which make it unable to defend the peninsula without a "big friend," the potential impact to U.S. resolve on the peninsula, and the nuclear threat to the north.<sup>24</sup> Interoperability, the fourth principle of C2, may be the single most challenging aspect in the transition of wartime OPCON, not only between America and the ROK but with regional partners as well (such as Japan). Since the Second World War, turmoil centered on the issues of "comfort women" and the Dokdo-Takeshima Island disputes have severely eroded the relationship between Japan and South Korea. As of now, Japan's defense policy allows it to conduct operations involving the use of force to respond to armed attacks against a foreign country. But that is only true if the foreign country has a close relationship with Japan, and the attack threatens Japan's survival and its people's rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, because of historical complications, if the U.S. relinquishes its seat in the CFC to the ROK, the impact to Japanese support in a Korean peninsula conflict remains unknown. A final factor that plays a role in interoperability is technology. With the ROK's military technology trailing behind that of the U.S., its ability to fulfill the command role during military operation diminishes due to its lack of organic assets that can assist in building the real-time C2 picture to advance the decision-making process.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps the most important element in the decision-making process is the operational commander. The quality or quantity of information received by the commander does not guarantee a sound decision. Instead, it is the operational commander's personality traits, character, professional knowledge, and experience that have the most influence. More likely than not, the operational commander who possesses high intellect, knowledge, experience, a

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<sup>24</sup> Shawn Creamer, e-mail message to the author, March 22, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> *Defense of Japan 2017*, 269.

<sup>26</sup> Shawn Creamer, e-mail message to the author, March 22, 2018.

strong will, and decisiveness will make sound decisions..<sup>27</sup> These leadership traits do not exist in South Korean military leaders because they have not held the formative jobs and gained the real-world operational experience that gives the U.S. leader an advantage of over his or her ROK counterpart..<sup>28</sup> In the end, it comes down to skills and expertise to perform the higher-level operational and strategic duties that influence U.S. military leaders' hesitance towards the reformation of the CFC. Additionally, the ROK's underfunding of its defensive modernization programs has impacted its ability to assume more significant leadership roles within the Alliance because of its limited capacity to sustain operations from the command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C4I) perspective.

Finally, some critics argue that returning wartime OPCON to South Korea through the restructuring of the CFC would undercut the U.S.-ROK Alliance. Their belief, like that of the conservative Liberty Korea Party, is that the lack of a U.S. leader in the commander's seat at the CFC weakens Washington's resolve to remain on the peninsula, as force strength after the exchange presents more of a liability than an opportunity. Due to the current capabilities of the ROK, issues with interoperability, and the potential threat to the U.S.-ROK relationship, many critics of the OPCON transfer view that the only effective way to proceed is to maintain the current structure and overcome the inherent challenges associated with its complexity. Having a skilled staff that maintains a clear understanding of each theater-level command's unique set of roles, missions, and authorities can help to circumvent these intricacies..<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Vego, X-63.

<sup>28</sup> Shawn Creamer, e-mail message to the author, March 22, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Creamer, *Theater-level Command and Alliance Decision-Making Architecture in Korea*, 2.

## CONCLUSION

To be sure, a reorganization of the CFC would be laborious and risky, but having a simplified command and control structure would lessen the potential for human error and reduce the impending fog and friction of war. Removal of the OPCON barrier through the reorganization of the CFC in conjunction with the termination of the obsolete Armistice Agreement can help remedy the issues with having four theater-level commands on the Korean peninsula. By enabling simplicity, the unity of command, and span of control to the current U.S.-ROK C2 arrangement, the U.S. can reduce redundancy, increase efficiency, and allow for U.S.-ROK asset reallocation to enhance force modernization and competency. Though the transition may bring about questions related to interoperability between regional partners, ROK military skills and experience, and the tenacity of the U.S.-ROK relationship, modifying the Allied C2 structure sooner rather than later will likely prove to be advantageous for both parties. The U.S.-ROK relationship needs to evolve past its current stagnated state. Sticking with the current integrated design hampers the development of a self-sufficient ROK military, which is currently using the U.S. military as a crutch. The removal of OPCON barriers through the reorganization the CFC may also help grow the ROK's organic capabilities. Finally, it could help the ROK learn the military processes which have come so naturally to its American counterparts because of the experiences gained and lessons learned from commanding in wartime situations.

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