The Unification of Korea: Choices for a New Nation

A Monograph

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This monograph looks at the potential impact a unified Korea might have upon the region and global competition. Although numerous concerns surround the peninsula's future, one might ask two primary questions in regard to unification and the balance of power: "What would unification look like?" and "What strategic impact would a unified Korea have on regional and global international relations?" Complicating this issue is the rising power of China and the United States interests in the region. The regional dynamics and history of the Korean Peninsula provide insight into how South Korea, North Korea, and other nations in the region have behaved to meet their national interests in similar situations. This monograph will offer answers by using international relation theories to propose that if unification occurs, it will result in an absorption unification model, with Korea hedging its alliances with the United States and China in order to meet its national interests.

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Abstract

The Unification of Korea: Choices for a New Nation, by COL Barton L. Johnke, US Army, 60 pages.

This monograph looks at the potential impact a unified Korea might have upon the regional and global competition. Although numerous concerns surround the peninsula's future, one might ask two primary questions in regard to unification and the balance of power: "What would unification look like?" and "What strategic impact would a unified Korea have on regional and global international relations?" Complicating this issue is the rising power of China and competing United States interests in the region. The regional dynamics and history of the Korean Peninsula provide insight into how South Korea, North Korea, and other nations in the region have behaved to meet their national interests in similar situations. This monograph will offer answers by using international relation theories to propose that if unification occurs, it will result in an absorption unification model, with Korea hedging its alliances with the United States and China in order to meet its national interests.

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Acronyms

ACFTA	ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement
ASCM	anti-ship cruise missiles
APEC	Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EAI	Enterprise for ASEAN Initiative
EEZ	Economic Exclusion Zone
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IADS	Integrated Air Defense System
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republic

Introduction

"The endgame is peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula."

—Lee Myung-bak, President of South Korea, 2008-1013

Illustrating its strategic importance in the international arena, the Korean Peninsula touts a history of occasionally playing center stage as global powers have vied for economic, military, and political leverage. With the division of the peninsula after World War II, its strategic importance and potential for conflict has magnified. This division sought to balance interests in the region by limiting the geographic advantage of any regional power gaining the peninsula's sole control. Although the division has produced a certain level of stability, maintaining this constancy has grown difficult, considering that a primary goal of both North and South Korea focuses on reunification. Politically, the Korean Peninsula sits at the "crossroads" of the Pacific powers of Russia, China, Japan, and the United States, which further compounds the peninsula's complexity for regional security interests.[1] Economically, the Korean Peninsula plays a vital role in the Asia-Pacific region, which includes "four of the ten largest economies in the world."[2] Specifically, China has exhibited remarkable growth, rising to dominance in the region and as a global competitor with the United States. The evolution of the two Koreas over recent decades and the potential for unification poses new and old questions as great power competition focuses once again on the Asia-Pacific region. Although numerous concerns surround the peninsula's future, one might ask two primary questions in regard to unification and the balance of power: "What would unification look like?" and "What strategic impact would a unified Korea have on regional and global international relations?" This monograph will offer answers by using international relation theories to propose that if unification occurs, it will result in an absorption

[1] Nicholas Eberstadt and Richard J. Ellings, *Korea's Future and the Great Powers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 1.

[2] Kurt M. Campbell, *The Pivot: The Future of American Statecraft in Asia* (New York, NY: Twelve, 2016), 5.

unification model, with Korea hedging its alliances with the United States and China in order to meet its national interests.

This monograph will use balance of power theory concepts to explain the strategic impacts that a unified Korea may have on the region and world. Regardless of the degree of likelihood that Korea will unify, the drive to do so remains constant and, therefore, an evaluation of the processes and potential alignments of a unification proves beneficial. To that end, this monograph will first discuss international relations theories to highlight important concepts that apply to the region before and after unification. Second, it will review the major countries in the Asia-Pacific region that would affect unification and that, consequently, a singular Korean nation would impact. Third, it will discuss unification history and possible scenarios to determine what a unified Korea might look like. It will include an application of the international relations concepts to a unified Korea to determine how Korea might act in regional relationships. In its conclusion, this monograph will highlight the strong likelihood that unification will result in an absorption scenario that gives rise to a democratic government with a free-market economy. Once the peninsula is unified, Korea's strategic importance in the region will force it to make alignment decisions, ones likely based on its own national interests and perceived threats in the region. Three likely options will surface: Korea may choose to align with the United States, align with China, or attempt to maintain a certain level of neutrality with respect to both nations. This alignment decision will significantly shift the regional distribution of power by either restricting or enhancing the ability of the United States or China to influence the region. Subsequently, this will also impact the substantial power competition between the United States and China.

Balance of Power and Alliance Formation Theories

During a transition period such as one that Korea's unification would pose, balance of power and alliance formation theories can provide useful concepts for understanding international relations. Numerous theories propose ideas to explain how alliances form in the international community as well as how the balance of power affects stability by explaining relations between

nations. This section will build a common understanding of the concepts within these theories, providing a framework to determine a unified Korea's potential impacts.

Consensus on definitions for balance of power theory is hardly unanimous, making application of a specific version difficult. As the author of three books on defense and arms control and a professor of international relations, Michael Sheehan points to ten different definitions in *The Balance of Power: History and Theory* as he highlights the "confusion surrounding the concept."[3] Conversely, this volume of work on balance of power theory not only significantly espouses many useful concepts but presents the topic's relevance as "as one of the most important ideas in history."[4] Identifying commonalities between these multiple interpretations reveals several common threads to apply to the Korean unification scenario. Establishing a foundational understanding of balance of power theory and then applying these threads form a framework to understanding how states perceive threats and preserve their national interests. While balance of power theory discusses other topics as well, the theory's flexibility and historical application contribute to its utility in predicting the impacts of Korean unification.

A basic understanding of balance of power theory helps establish a shared vision of how one can apply common threads from the theory's multiple versions to a unification scenario. In *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice for the 21st Century*, editors T.V. Paul, James Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann lay the theory's foundation, citing that "All versions of balance of power theory begin with the hard-core assumptions of realist theory: the system is anarchic,[5] the key actors are territorial states, their goals are the maximization of power or security, and they act rationally to promote those goals."[6] Michael Sheehan further simplifies the theory by focusing on Kenneth

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[3] Michael Sheehan, *The Balance of Power: History and Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 2.

[4] Ibid., 1.

[5] Anarchy is described as a system lacking higher authority and any means to enforce agreements. See T.V. Paul, James Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 46.

[6] Paul, Wirtz, and Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*, 31.

Waltz's idea that balance of power politics must start with two components: "that an international order be anarchic and that it be populated by units wishing to survive." [7] To advance a common understanding, this monograph will not only utilize the foundational understanding that states have a level of flexibility in order to act in their own best interests but will also form a framework for the application of additional concepts.

Balance of power theory also focuses on how a nation's rising power affects other nations and the stability of its relationships. Different aspects of this theory often focus on the concept that a country will seek to balance a rising nation by aligning with other nations also seeking to counter the rising nation's potential threat. The alignments during the Cold War offer one such historical example of how numerous actors aligned. Why and how a nation would react to another nation's relative rise in power remains a consistent theme in these theoretical discussions. A nation's perception of the intentions of the nation rising in power drives why and how that nation might react. How that same nation would react could take many paths, but aligning with or against a powerful nation surfaces as one of the primary paths in many versions of the theory. These two common trends allow a more focused means to assess the application of balance of power theory toward a Korean unification scenario. Although an analysis of why and how a nation would react to a rising nation forms the foundation for this framework, other concepts of balance of power theory will also prove important to understand and apply to this scenario.[8]

Alliance formation is tied to options for "why and how" a nation may react in the event of a rising power. Stephen Walt, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, presents one such idea in his book *The Origins of Alliances.* Summarizing his theory, Walt attests, "States form alliances primarily to balance against threats. Threats, in turn, are a

[7] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics.* See Sheehan, *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, 193.

[8] Michael Sheehan provides an example of this during the Cold War as he discusses multiple aspects of balancing between NATO and Warsaw Pact nations aligned with the United States and USSR, respectively. Sheehan, *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, 181-185.

function of power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions."[9] These four factors become the critical aspect for weaker nations as they interpret the severity and presence of threats. Threats, in turn, "have the greatest impact on the decision" to either bandwagon with or balance against a more powerful nation.[10] For a weaker state seeking to improve its security, these four factors impact whether or not it perceives a threat from a greater power. The presence of a threat or lack thereof becomes of vital importance under a realist lens in the balance of power as weaker states seek to meet their individual interests of survival and security.

Analyzing the four factors that impact a threat will aid in their application to a unified Korea later in this monograph. Walt expands on the four factors in more specific detail, offering illustrations that can impact alignment. His discussion provides historic examples that add a depth of understanding to the four primary factors impacting threat perception. Recognizing the depth of threat perceptions and the security 'calculous' used to weigh options becomes complex due to the additional factors of nations' shared history, current political situations, and other external actor influences; yet, the end result lies in the direction the weaker state takes to mitigate the threat of a more powerful nation by either aligning with or against the greatest threat. One interesting aspect of Walt's discussion highlights his contention that the choice between balancing and bandwagoning can become flexible during periods of peace. Stressing that alliances sometimes dissolve after periods of war, Walt points to several examples including the frayed alliance between China and Vietnam following the Vietnam War. This important point aligns with realist concepts of flexibility within state actions and allows nations to hedge or

[9] Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), vi.

[10] Ibid., 28.

maintain a certain level of neutrality in relationships in addition to balancing and bandwagoning.[11]

The previous paragraphs describe a framework in which states that act in their own interest can choose alliance formation to address a power imbalance when faced with a rising, powerful nation. The resultant alignment can affect balance of power at the regional and possibly global level. In a situation in which China and the United States are vying for a competitive edge, the importance of a powerful nation such as a unified Korea could not only affect the regional relationships but also impact global competition due to the reach and amount of power both countries wield. Before applying this framework to a unification scenario, one must discuss the regional dynamics and relationships.

Regional and Global Dynamics

The Korean Peninsula is situated in Northeast Asia, an area that, in turn, is part of the larger Asia-Pacific region, a vast area inclusive of countries spanning southward to Australia, northward to Russia, and reaching to India in the west. The relationship dynamics between nations in this region are intertwined politically, militarily, and economically. Tensions in the South China Sea and the Korean Peninsula offer two examples that add context to the region's intertwined relationship dynamics and can apply to later questions surrounding Korean unification. To add a logical framework to the impact of Korean unification, this contextual understanding can also apply to the balance of power and alliance formation theories.

Geographically, one can further divide the Asia-Pacific region into Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia in order to focus analysis efforts. Korean tensions dominate in the North while disputes in the South China Sea seem to direct interactions in the South. Chinese territory spans

[11] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 28-49. The author uses these pages to expand on the four primary factors, offering historic examples and how a multitude of subordinate factors can impact alignment. For example, ideological solidarity may lesson threat perception by a weaker state, whereas divergent ideology may magnify a threat. Additionally, foreign aid through economic and military aid may promote an alliance. Numerous other ideas are explained that can impact a Korean scenario.

both of these areas, allowing China access to influence both important areas directly. Furthermore, the geographic importance of these areas for the region and globe proves hard to understate. In Southeast Asia, the South China Sea and connecting maritime features serve as a chokepoint between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, funneling over sixty percent of the world's maritime trade. This includes oil transport that amounts to "triple the amount that passes through the Suez Canal, and fifteen times the amount that transits the Panama Canal." [12] This volume of maritime trade makes freedom of navigation an important factor of Southeast Asia for both the region and globe. The South China Sea also holds substantial natural resources, such as "proven oil reserves of seven billion barrels, and an estimated 900 trillion cubic feet of natural gas," prompting some to classify the South China Sea as "the second Persian Gulf."[13]

Territorial disputes for competing claims add uncertainty and complexity to the important resources and shipping routes in the South China Sea. The close proximity of multiple nations disputing the South China Sea islands creates a nightmare for common agreement on overlapping maritime exclusion zones. For example, five countries (China, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Brunei) have disputed claims for both territory and maritime exclusion zones in the Spratly Islands.[14] Yet, disputes are not limited to the Spratly Islands as the South China Sea contains over two hundred "specks of land" that range from tiny islands to coral reefs and rock formations. While some of these remain submerged throughout the year, they nonetheless prove important to territorial claims.[15] The land mass of the territorial claims does not necessarily make them important, but rather the maritime economic exclusion zones (EEZ) surrounding them

[12] Robert D. Kaplan, *Asia's Cauldron* (New York: Random House, 2014), 9.

[13] Ibid., 10.

[14] Adam Leong Kok Wey, "A Small State's Foreign Affairs Strategy: Making Sense of Malaysia's Strategic Response to the South China Sea Debacle," *Comparative Strategy* 36, no. 5 (November), 395, accessed March 7, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01495933.2017.1379830.

[15] Kaplan, *Asia's Cauldron*, 10-11.

become items of value for claimant countries since they determine access to resources and shipping routes.[16]

The South China Sea's valuable resources, criticality to maritime trade, and disputed territories provide insight into the region's political, economic, and military dynamics. China's dominating actions in the South China Sea tend to influence the actions of other countries with competing claims. Since most countries with competing claims are also members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the disputes almost always involve multiple nations.[17] China has used force to either occupy or directly oppose competing claims, including a 1974 naval clash with Vietnam over the Paracel Islands and another in 1988 over "Johnson (Chigua) Reef, in which seventy-four Vietnamese were killed."[18] After backlash from these types of actions, China sought political solutions through diplomatic efforts and has stated publicly that it desires peaceful solutions as supported by the 1982 United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). However, "China calls for bilateral talks with each claimant, not multilateral ones," in part to gain advantages over weaker nations where they can leverage other forms of national power.[19] This technique also allows China to split ASEAN nations rather than deal with ASEAN as a sole entity. ASEAN and other nations have responded with diplomatic efforts, including an ASEAN official condemnation through the 1992 Declaration on the South China Sea that asserted China was using a "talk and take" strategy. [20] Notably, the Philippines "initiated the

[16] Under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) economic exclusion zones (EEZ) establish territorial rights extending between twelve or two hundred miles into the sea based on coastline and type of landmass. See Kaplan, *Asia's Cauldron*, 172-173.

[17] Formed in 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) currently consists of ten member states (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Viet Nam, Lao, Myanmar, and Cambodia). "The ASEAN Community is comprised of three pillars, namely the ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community." See "ASEAN Overview," ASEAN.org, accessed March 7, 2019, https://asean.org/asean/about-asean/overview/.

[18] M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Strategy in the South China Sea," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 33, no. 3, 292, accessed March 7, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1355/cs33-3b. 298.

[19] Ibid., 300.

[20] Alice D. Ba, "China and ASEAN: Renavigating Relations for a 21st-Century Asia," *Asian Survey* 43, no. 4 (September), 622, accessed January 16, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/as.2003.43.4.622. 627.

compulsory arbitral procedure under Article 287 and Annex VII of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) against China with regard to their maritime disputes in the South China Sea."[21] Ironically, the ruling went against the Chinese and was based on UNCLOS, but China has largely ignored the ruling and continued its "talk and take" strategy. This complex web of disputes among several nations connected geopolitically shows the interconnected nature of the region and the significant power China wields to achieve its interests.

As stated in this section and the introduction, the Korean Peninsula's dominant influence on relationships in Northeast Asia is largely connected to the historic significance of the peninsula's division and geographic location between the regional powers of China, Japan, and Russia.[22] When including the strong US ties to the region, the peninsula effectually finds itself between four major powers. Historically, all these countries have shed blood in efforts regarding the peninsula: namely, in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), World War II, and the Korean War (1950-1953). Consequently, the tremendous loss of life suffered in these conflicts provides credence to the ominous Korean phrase "a shrimp among whales." [23] However, the current nuclear threat that an unstable North Korea poses, coupled with the strength of the South Korean economy (the 11th largest in the world), challenges the validity of this Korean phrase; the peninsula nations may resemble "a shrimp" no longer as they can now more readily pursue their own interests with the backing of increased military and economic power. Engagement with both Koreas also presents significant risk and rewards. As the era of competition between the United States and China evolves, the peninsula's geographic importance maintains strength, giving the United States a foothold to compete with China directly and on their front doorstep. Tied to geography, these regional dynamics help illustrate the connections to

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[21] Wei-chin Lee, "Introduction: The South China Sea Dispute and the 2016 Arbitration Decision," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 22, no. 2 (March), 179-84, accessed March 7, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11366-017-9473-z.179.

[22] Kaplan, *Asia's Cauldron*, 8.

[23] Eberstadt and Ellings, *Korea's Future and the Great Powers*, 5-6.

military, economic, and political relations among the region's nations. Paul Dibb of the Australian National University's Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies discusses this reality in his book, *America's Asian Alliances,* citing the relevance of Asian geopolitics. While highlighting the importance of democratization and globalization in the region, he stresses that Asia still "retains many of the geopolitical elements of the Cold War. Moreover, the geography of Asia still holds considerable influence on the military forces and strategic preoccupations of regional powers."[24] This offers another supporting view that reinforces the continued importance of the Korean Peninsula in the region. These examples from Northeast and Southeast Asia will help during the application of the concepts of alliance formation theory and balance of power since geographic proximity plays a role in both concepts.

In addition to the tensions in Northeast and Southeast Asia, significant growth in recent decades also characterizes the region. As such, economic, military, and population statistics best capture the region's growth. For example, in 1990, only two countries (Japan and China) in this region were ranked in the top ten world economies. Today, four countries in the region have broken into the top ten, and projections beyond 2020 predict that five of the top ten countries will lie in this region, comprising the largest economies in the world.[25] This effectively places "half of the world's economic output" in the region within the near future.[26] Although researchers place much emphasis on the rise of China, South Korea, India, Indonesia, and Japan, dramatic growth rates have occurred throughout the region, demonstrating that the scope of growth is widespread. A review of the CIA World Factbook shows that most countries' GDP increases have ranged

[24] Robert D. Blackwill et al., eds., *America's Asian Alliances* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 3.

[25] Campbell, *The Pivot*, 49.

[26] Ibid., 5.

between three to seven percent since 2015, in comparison to US GDP growth that has fluctuated at meager levels below three percent.[27]

The region also claims the largest population in the world, accounting for over sixty percent of the world's population.[28] In addition to providing a large workforce and military capability, the huge population also results in tremendous cost. Infrastructure, sanitation, health care, and energy requirements for the region put significant strain on the economies to meet the needs of such a mass of people. Currently, the region accounts for one-third of global energy consumption, an escalating statistic that researchers predict will rise to one-half within one or two decades.[29] The demand for energy also links Northeast and Southeast Asia, with over sixty percent of both Japanese and Korean energy supplies flowing through or from Southeast Asia; almost eighty percent of China's needs transit the same area as well.

The growing population in the area has, in part, fueled this progress, allowing a substantial, low-cost workforce to encourage foreign investment. The economic relationship between South Korea and China offers a prime example, as South Korea's growing labor costs have encouraged its China investments, which rose by almost one billion dollars between 1994 and 1998. Additional factors such as geographic proximity, cultural similarities, and the high number of bilingual workers further strengthen the reasons for investment.[30] The relationship has not been without problems, however, as trade imbalances in low-cost products have caused "South Korean protectionism, leading to trade-related political tensions."[31] This snapshot of the Sino-Korean economic relationship is similar to relationships throughout the region,

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[27] Central Intelligence Agency. "The World Factbook," accessed January 30, 2019, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/.

[28] Campbell, *The Pivot*, 37.

[29] Ibid., 37.

[30] Selig S. Harrison, *Korean Endgame: A Strategy for Reunification and U.S. Disengagement (Century Foundation Book)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 316-317.

[31] Ibid., 316.

demonstrating that economic growth has increased regional ties that have intertwined the nations in economic competition and mutual dependency.

Although the sustainability of the region's rise remains tentative, its rapid growth has enabled increased military expenditures as well as greater spending in other government sectors. Largely paralleling general economic growth, military spending increases of an estimated 7.4 percent have resulted in the region surpassing European expenditures and stand as second only to the United States.[32] The increases have allowed modernization of military capabilities as explained in China's Military Strategy (2015),[33] a governmental white paper; in fact the report stresses the "long-standing task for China to safeguard its maritime rights and interests" as it points to the situations in the South China Sea and on the Korean Peninsula. To support this task, the document shifts its focus from "offshore waters defense" to the combination of "offshore waters defense" with "open seas protection" by directing what one could classify as a multi-domain joint force.[34] A RAND Corporation study reflects these improvement efforts, quantifying how the gap in capabilities between the US and Chinese militaries has closed significantly. In this study, the authors explain how Chinese modernization efforts in ten operational areas from 1996 through 2015 have focused on improving their capabilities while capitalizing on the geographic-proximity disputed areas such as Taiwan and the Spratly Islands.[35] These improvements have closed the capability gap and threaten freedom of action for US military forces in those areas. Specifically, improved ballistic missiles (increased accuracy and range to three thousand kilometers) and the procurement of fourth generation fighter aircraft have placed US Pacific

[32] Campbell, *The Pivot,* 65.

[33] "China's Military Strategy," The State Council of the People's Republic of China, May 27, 2015, accessed March 8, 2019, http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2015/05/27/content_281475115610833.htm.

[34] Ibid.

[35] These operational areas cover air and missile, maritime, space and counterspace, cyber, and nuclear domains. See Eric Heginbotham et al., *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996-2017* (n.p.: RAND Corporation, 2015), iii, xix.

military bases within range of Chinese forces.[36] Furthermore, China has created a formidable integrated air defense system (IADS) by acquiring and deploying improved early warning radar systems and modern surface to air missile systems with "sophisticated seekers and ranges up to 200 km."[37] Conversely, several countries in the region have sought modernization of capabilities as a means to counter China's aggressive behavior in the South China Sea; acquisitions in Singapore and Malaysia substantiate their drive to bolster naval and air force capabilities, which include the purchase of MIG-29s, F-18s, and modern frigates using Seawolf and Exocet missiles.[38] Nuclear capabilities, particularly in regard to North Korea, remain the most prevalent topic in Northeast Asia's security concerns, which allow North Korea to bolster itself against the US-South Korean alliance. In 2006, North Korea tested a one kiloton device and was estimated to possess at least three other devices. Current conservative estimates state that North Korea possesses ten to twenty devices and has tested larger devices, including a fifteen-kiloton detonation in 2016.[39] Combined with its warhead development and missile testing, the nuclear threat that North Korea poses has transitioned from the hypothetical to reality. This brief discussion highlights a region that has increased the size and quality of military forces substantially in recent decades, often to build power to counter another nation's military power. The rise of capabilities in the South China Sea as well as North Korea's nuclear ambitions both complement diplomatic efforts to address disputes, allowing smaller nations to gain leverage by increasing the potential costs of military conflict. These examples point to balance of power theory and the concept of the security dilemma in international relations.

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[36] Heginbotham et al, *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard*, xxiii.

[37] Ibid., xviv.

[38] Michael G. Gallagher, "China's Illusory Threat to the South China Sea," *International Security* 19, no. 1, 175-177, accessed January 31, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2539152.

[39] Hans M. Kristensen and Robert S. Norris, "North Korean Nuclear Capabilities, 2018," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 74, no. 1 (January), 41-51, accessed March 8, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2017.1413062. 41, 46.

Not only have territorial and trade disputes accompanied the rapid growth throughout the region, but cultural animosity linked to the region's extensive history of conflict has as well. While the division of the Korean Peninsula clearly exemplifies such tensions, the disputes are not isolated but often become linked through shared interests among regional nations. As a cultural aspect, the strong sense of nationalism among many of these countries has created political fallout in regional relations, including within alliances and multilateral institutions. In Robert Kaplan's book, *Asia's Cauldron,* he describes how nationalism in Asia drives a desire to improve military capabilities in order to protect territorial sovereignty since institutions such as ASEAN include disputing nations and lack effective controls to remedy the disagreements. Without agreement, nationalist tendencies encourage countries like Vietnam and the Philippines, to protect their own interest first.[40]

In other words, the role of security alliances and multilateral institutions in the area demonstrate the importance of cultural differences and nationalism in the region. Unlike Europe, no dominant multilateral institution exists, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the European Union (EU), to unify nations or serve as a venue for negotiations when disputes arise. Rather, bilateral agreements or alliances dominate the region, with the exception of a few multilateral institutions such as ASEAN or the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organization.[41] US security alliances following World War II have continued beyond the end of the Cold War and remain an important component for stability in the region, particularly Northeast Asia. Viewpoints differ, though, on the effectiveness of the alliances and institutions. More specifically, governments have criticized the multilateral institutions for their ineffectiveness in the various territorial disputes, as one can see in the lack of ASEAN success in South China Sea clashes. Although ASEAN has issued statements on China's aggressive actions

[40] Kaplan, *Asia's Cauldron*, 16,33, 133.

[41] Blackwill et al., eds., America's Asian Al*liances*, 5.

in the South China Sea, ASEAN member states require consensus before taking action; this stipulation has actually resulted in inaction due to the competing geopolitical rivalries among its member states. In addition to member states holding competing claims in the South China Sea, "Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia are strong traditional allies of China. Myanmar, facing the Indian Ocean, has no strategic interest in the South China Sea, nor does Laos, being a landlocked country. These states also strongly rely on China's benevolence for both political and economic survival." [42] This lack of consensus due to individual national interests has prevented ASEAN from organizing itself effectively to leverage its full economic powers. While alliances have produced limited success, they have also failed to resolve North Korean denuclearization. The 1994 Agreed Framework, as well as multiple instances of multi-national talks, did not prevent development of nuclear weapons in North Korea.[43] Yet, these examples illustrate the importance of nationalism and the role of cultural differences when developing alliances or resolving disputes. The willingness of North Korea to refuse Chinese efforts to diffuse tensions on the peninsula demonstrates that it still maintains a degree of autonomy, even in light of the critical support China provides. The cultural and historic differences between Vietnam and China have resulted in conflict and tension, even when both governments and economies operate under state-directed capitalism, which should promote agreement; instead, cultural differences and a history of conflict have sewn mistrust.[44]

[42] Wey, "A Small State's Foreign Affairs Strategy: Making Sense of Malaysia's Strategic Response to the South China Sea Debacle," 395.

[43] The Agreed Framework was an agreement between the United States and North Korea which offered the lifting of sanctions in exchange for promises from North Korea to stop the pursuit of nuclear weapon technology. In the early 2000's, the United States, China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea engaged North Korea in what has been called "The Six Party Talks" to seek denuclearization after the failure of the Agreed Framework. See Priyanka Boghani, "The U.S. and North Korea On the Brink: A Timeline," *PBS*, February 28, 2019, accessed March 8, 2019, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/the-u-s-and-north-korea-on-the-brink-a-timeline/.

[44] Kaplan, *Asia's Cauldron*, 56-57.

Even upon casual observation, it becomes clear that the Korean Peninsula continues to play an important role in the region through its nations' sense of nationalism and ability to wield power in relationships. Although the peninsula's current division allows relatively equal access for competing outside powers, the undeniable drive toward unification would present outside powers with tremendous risk and opportunity in comparison to the current balance of power. Unification may very well occur in spite of any outside power's efforts, forcing outside nations to deal with unification's impact on the regional balance of power as they seek to protect their own interests in this historically significant area. Specifically, the rise of China and the continued US presence in the region create a scenario in which a unified Korea would play a crucial role in the regional balance of power, with decidedly global implications. In assessing the way that unification may occur, one can ascertain that the means of unification could affect how a unified Korea would align itself, resulting in regional and global strategic impacts.

Korean Peninsula

Unification has been and will likely continue to be the overarching end goal of both North and South Korea.[45] Separated hastily in the aftermath of World War II, the two separate Korean governments as established in 1945 have seen the prospect of unification lurking in the background of peninsular and global relations ever since.[46] Even as Allied powers laid out the early plans for Korea in the Cairo Declaration, with the statement "in due course Korea shall become free and independent," the ire of Dr. Syngman Rhee, the future leader of South Korea, ignited.[47] The initial struggles of peninsular partition, which the Allied powers devised during the Potsdam Conference, was followed by a failed United Nations plan for unifying elections, ultimately proving external powers to be incapable or unwilling to agree upon unification. This

[45] Harrison, *Korean Endgame*, 67.

[46] Ibid., 69.

[47] Young Jeh Kim, *Toward a Unified Korea: History and Alternatives* (Seoul: Research Centre for Peace and Unification of Korea, 1987), 4.

transitioned the mantle of unification to North and South Korea, both of which initially sought to unify through the use of force. Receiving mainly defensive military support from the United States, South Korea lacked offensive military weapons such as tanks and heavy artillery to initiate military action, but North Korea's substantial support from the USSR helped enable the invasion of South Korea in 1950. The stalemate of the Korean War gave way to a power struggle in which both sides sought an upper hand. This power struggle shaped both nations' approaches to unification and further evolved as the relative power of both nations progressed to the present day, with South Korea standing high above North Korea in almost every measure of national power. The evolution of both Korean states post-division provides insight to both a potential unification and their potential alignment afterward.[48]

The likelihood of unification remains difficult to predict. The relationship between the involved nations has included war, name calling, threats of destruction, and demonstrations of capabilities, such as North Korea's missile and nuclear testing. Yet, the countries have also engaged diplomatically on several occasions, such as the Agreed Framework in 1994, which sought to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons on the peninsula. These oscillations seemed to reach a critical point during President Donald Trump's first years in office, when North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and President Trump exchanged unpleasantries; these included Trump calling Kim "rocket man" and Kim alleging Trump was "mentally deranged."[49] These exchanges were followed by two unprecedented summits between the two leaders at Singapore in 2018 and Vietnam in 2019. Although any concrete results remain in limbo, these recent events continue the predictably unpredictable relationships on the peninsula. Even in the midst of the

[48] Kim, *Toward a Unified Korea*, 4-28. This book provides valuable insight and substantiated history of the Korean views on unification as well as external power perspective.

[49] This online source provides a detailed timeline of provocations and agreements related to tensions on the Korean peninsula. See Priyanka Boghani, "The U.S. and North Korea On the Brink: A Timeline," https://www.pbs.org, February 28, 2019, accessed March 8, 2019, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/the-u-s-and-north-korea-on-the-brink-a-timeline/.

recent political turmoil, the North Korean regime called for unification, proposing "peaceful reunification based on a nationwide agreement."[50] While the Korean War exemplifies the extreme to which the peninsular powers have resorted to achieve their goal, both nations have sought other unification alternatives as well. The distribution of power on the peninsula has switched since the Korean War, affecting the unification approach. North Korea's initial strength relative to South Korea has given way to a prosperous and powerful South Korea in both military and economic terms. Also, during this time, both Korean nations have seen a renewed sense of nationalism. Shifts in power and the rise in nationalism have affected the Korean approach to unification as well as their relations with other nations.[51]

Korean nationalism has risen at different times throughout history. Conquests and division at the hands of China, Russia, Japan, and the United States have contributed to national pride, autonomy, and a continued desire to unite. Although manifested somewhat differently, the sense of nationalism in both countries remains a strong motivator that influences their actions and relationships with other nations. In North Korea, nationalism is expressed with the term "juche," which loosely translates to self-reliance. North Korea's first leader, Kim Il Sung, first used the term in a 1955 speech intended to encourage workers to solve problems by seeking inspiration from their own history and shift from reliance on Soviet methods. He expanded the focus on workers to address all North Koreans as a national source of pride, proclaiming that "man is the master of everything and decides everything."[52] Juche permeates much of North Korean ideology and bases its strength in a sense of pride gained from surviving the hardships of the Korean War;

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[50] Da-min Jung, "North Korea Calls for Unification under Two Regimes," *Korea Times*, March 29, 2019, accessed March 28, 2019, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2019/01/103_262664.html.

[51] Jong-Chun Baek describes the changes in power between North and South Korea. He highlights statistics tied to the balance of power on the peninsula, while discussing the effects on approaches to unification which are summarized in this paragraph. See Jong-Chun Baek, *Probe for Korean Reunification: Conflict and Security* (Seoul, Korea: Research Center for Peace and Unification of Korea, 1988), 230-238.

[52] Martin Hart-Landsberg, *Korea: Division, Reunification, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998), 166 and 168.

this self-reliant mindset persists to present day as a symbol of resilience to perceived oppression from South Korean allies, namely the United States. However, both countries have sought and even required the support from their respective allies.[53] In South Korea, nationalist sentiment also persists and reinforces the ties to unification efforts. Although its nationalism developed differently through its democratic evolution and leveraging a sense of pride gained from rising "like a phoenix from the ashes of the Korean War," the sense of Korean identity in the South strongly influences domestic and foreign policy.[54] Importantly, nationalism in South Korea also converges on resentment over the peninsula's division and a desire to unify through a shared history with the people of North Korea.[55] During a speech in 1992, the newly elected South Korean president, Kim Young Sam, emphasized a sense of nationalist unity with North Korea when he stated, "No foreign ally can be equal in importance to our ethnic brethren in the North."[56] This sense of nationalism has kept the goal of unification as the "endgame" for both nations.

This shift in power has also affected the different Korean approaches to peaceful unification. In the first years after the peninsula's division, both North and South Korea viewed military force as a viable means toward unification. North Korea's unsuccessful invasion of South Korea in 1950 clearly highlights its efforts to unify through use of force, but South Korea's President Rhee also championed his plan that advocated forceful means to unify the peninsula, called "Pukchin T'ongil." This term effectively meant "to march North," signaling the intent to unify by force. North Korean plans failed due to the intervention of the United Nations, while

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[53] Harrison, *Korean Endgame*, 8-9 and 15.

[54] The evolution of the South Korean democracy had periods of heavy-handed government control, populist protests supported by leftist movements, and influences of powerful business conglomerates on the government's role in economic development. In the pages cited here, the author describes this process and stress that the government leveraged fear of North Korea and nationalist desire to unify to contain extremist viewpoints from excessive influence, particularly in the population. See Hart-Landsberg, *Korea: Division, Reunification, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 174-208.

[55] Harrison, *Korean Endgame*, 102 and 306-307.

[56] Hart-Landsberg, *Korea: Division, Reunification, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 201.

President Rhee's plan never materialized primarily due to lack of US support, politically and militarily.[57] As their military efforts proved fruitless, both countries adapted their approaches to leverage each of their respective strengths. During the early 1970s, bi-lateral negotiations attempted to address unification, with symmetry of power shaping the negotiations at this time. Although military power favored North Korea and economic strengths began to favor South Korea, both countries offset these differences with support from their Cold War allies. South Korea favored a multistep process that would gradually increase engagements and the intertwining of governmental functions to establish peaceful unification conditions. North Korea favored a one-step approach, with removal of US military forces followed by unification. The latter approach would have allowed the strength of the tightly controlled government and military to achieve unification from a position of relative strength. In contrast, the South Korean approach allowed reforms and exposure to the outside world to reduce support for the communist regime and weaken the DPRK's control of its own government before achieving unification.[58] The opposing approaches and unwillingness of either side to concede caused negotiations to fail. Eventually, this symmetry gave way to an imbalance in South Korea's favor, bringing different variables to bear on the unification approach.

As the Cold War ended, extensive support from the collapsing Soviet Union for North Korea evaporated. Furthermore, the Soviet Union began to require cash payment for future exports to North Korea and also demanded repayment for debt totaling over $4 billion. Between 1990 and 1991, Soviet oil exports dropped by over four hundred thousand tons. Although China increased oil exports to offset the dwindling support from the defunct USSR, they cut food shipments to North Korea in 1995 due to Chinese domestic concerns for inflation of food prices. As support dropped, North Korean agricultural production suffered due to droughts and floods in

[57] Kim, *Toward a Unified Korea*, 29-30.

[58] Ibid., 231-232 and 29-30.

1995 and 1996. The resulting food shortages were only "partially mitigated" by international aid to avert a crisis.[59] In conjunction, South Korean growth far surpassed its northern neighbor, registering GDP growth rates between six and seven percent during the same period, creating a large, distinct advantage of power in South Korea's favor.[60] This power imbalance and North Korean hostilities together diminished hopes for unification talks, a mindset still flourishing today. North Korea appears unwilling to negotiate from a position of weakness, and the South Korean government has dug in on its position for a multistep process. Waiting for collapse with hopes it will be peaceful seems the South Korean option of choice. Even in light of these hurdles for unification, South Korea modified its approach two decades ago. In 1998, South Korean President Kim laid out policies that included a commitment to make no attempt to absorb North Korea.[61] This approach seemed to recognize the stalemate for any bilateral agreement while also conveying to the People's Republic of China that South Korea would not pose a threat to North Korea unless attacked. This coincides with a Chinese approach to offer meager "life support" aid to North Korea while still acknowledging Chinese concerns for South Korean leadership on the peninsula.[62] This imbalance with North Korea and corresponding prosperity in South Korea is reflected in "growing skepticism about the desire of unification, driven in large part by the perception that it would be prohibitively costly."[63] Even with this growing skepticism, the South Korean government continued to seek options for unification, as evident in 2014 when former

[59] Harrison, *Korean Endgame*, 311, 312.

[60] Jonathan D. Pollack and Chung Min Lee, *Preparing for Korean Unification: Scenarios and Implications* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Publishing, 1999), 21.

[61] Ibid., 7.

[62] Ibid., xvi.

[63] Marcus Noland, Sherman Robinson, and Liu Li-gang, "The Costs and Benefits of Korean Unification: Alternate Scenarios," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 8 (August 1998), 801.

President Park Geun-hye stated a desire to "break away from inter-Korean confrontation, threats of war, nuclear threats, to open an era of unification"[64]

The history and current events of the Korean Peninsula demonstrate the importance of both economics and security as they affect unification prospects. Nationalism may help drive the desire of the Korean people to unify, but it will also likely continue to affect Korean behavior post-unification. The power-shift's reliance on economic and security factors, as opposing sides sought advantages to maintain security, demonstrates a mutual desire to act independently, even when influenced by strong outside foreign powers. A unified Korea will have to determine in its national security interests if globalization or security alliances will best meet its needs as it seeks to find its place in the balance of power among great superpower competition.

China

The rise of China has contributed to its ability to more intensely influence other countries while also utilizing a broader range of national powers than in previous decades. As previously discussed, China's actions in the South China Sea offer one example where China has used military force to exert influence over the Philippines and Vietnam. However, China has also used its rising economic power to work inroads into ASEAN, via the ASEAN Plus Three. Formed in 1997, this forum includes China, Japan, and South Korea and is designed to address economic and security issues. China's stabilizing economic actions during the 1997 Asian financial crisis played a significant role in the creation of this forum as China stressed the importance of its efforts to minimize the crisis. Then in 2001, member states signed the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA) and promised to "accelerate trade and investment between China and its southern neighbors." [65] This agreement included concessions from China, including reduced

[64] Young Ho Park. "South and North Korea's Views on the Unification of Korean Peninsula and Inter-Korean Relations." In *Texte présenté lors d'une conférence KRIS-Brookings*, vol. 21. (2014).

[65] Thomas J. Christensen, "Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster? The Rise of China and U.S. Policy toward East Asia," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (July), 92, accessed March 9, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/isec.2006.31.1.81.

tariffs and barriers to investment; and it appealed to ASEAN by offering access to "an alternative and potentially larger market than that of the U.S." [66] Even with these concessions, remaining concerns from ASEAN's newest members delayed ASEAN approval of ACFTA for almost two years. These concerns included "(1) persistent uneasiness about China's regional influence; (2) concern about Chinese competition in domestic markets; and (3) concern about how the agreement would affect ASEAN's newer members." [67] China responded by providing additional incentives, which included debt forgiveness to ASEAN's four newest members. China has benefitted from this effort, gaining improved relationships and confidence with the ASEAN member states. The net result of these diplomatic and economic efforts "bolstered its regional leadership credentials and its image as a responsible, big power in Southeast Asia." [68] Although these efforts have not erased concerns regarding expansion in the South China Sea, it does show China's ability to influence other nations through the use of diplomacy and economic power.

Importantly, China's rapid economic growth has increased its available capital to improve military, economic, and political capabilities. Notably, China's gross domestic product (GDP) has risen from the world's tenth largest in 1980 to boast a projection that will surpass the United States' GDP in the year 2030.[69] China's investments in military spending and modernization efforts have also increased. In relation to the rest the region, China's military spending has exceeded that of its neighbors, including surpassing India by threefold.[70] While China's military spending as a percentage of GDP has remained surprisingly constant, its huge boost in GDP has meant a significant increase in military spending as well. Since its rapid growth in GDP began in the 1990s, "China's military spending grew by double digits every year from

[66] Ba, "China and ASEAN: Renavigating Relations for a 21st-Century Asia," 639.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Campbell, *The Pivot*, 5.

[70] Ibid., 66.

2000 to 2014, for a total increase of more than 480 percent in real terms over that period." [71] This growth has enabled modernization of the military across naval, land, air, and asymmetric capabilities. In addition to the additional air force, ballistic missiles, and IADs mentioned earlier, China is actively expanding its capabilities to influence the space domain. The US Department of Defense has asserted that the Chinese are acquiring "directed energy weapons and satellite jammers, as well as a direct-ascent kinetic kill capability against satellites in low-earth orbit."[72] The result of these improvements has increased China's ability to effectively defend against or offensively attack any opposing force in areas beyond the US bases at Guam. For example, in 1996, China possessed around one hundred ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges out to Taiwan. Today, China possesses thousands of these weapons that range beyond Guam. With its "modernized B-6K medium bombers, it could, in a single raid of 32 aircraft, launch up to 192 land-attack or anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) at targets as far away as Guam." [73] These improved capabilities pose significant challenges for the projection of US forces in the region; if China's economy continues to support this type of dramatic modernization, it seems highly plausible that US military credibility in the region will come into serious question.

Even in light of its economic surge and corresponding growth in national power, China still has significant requirements to provide for the needs of its massive population. Although China has made significant strides in reducing poverty rates, from sixty percent in 1990 to twelve percent in 2010, income between rural and urban populations has seen widening gaps.[74] In 1978, the incomes of those in rural and urbans areas were nearly equal, but by 2012, urban income grew

[71] David Ochmanek et al., *U.S. Military Capabilities and Forces for a Dangerous World: Rethinking the U.S. Approach to Force Planning* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 8.

[72] Ochmanek et al., *U.S. Military Capabilities and Forces for a Dangerous World*, 13.

[73] Ibid., 11.

[74] Campbell, *The Pivot,* 40.

to over three times as much as rural income.[75] This income gap is one of several factors contributing to a rising level of social unrest in rural areas. In one estimate, incidences of social disturbances (classified as riots or demonstrations) rose from 58,000 in 2003 to over 180,000 in 2010.[76] Interestingly, the demonstrations are directed at local governments and typically fall within the legal requirements to demonstrate, leaving the central government mostly out of the fray. The central government has implemented reforms to address local corruption by replacing leaders and, in some instances, allowing voting for new local leaders. [77]

In addition to income inequality, changing demographics also present challenges for China. Its aging population and male-to-female ratio imbalance prove as two such areas. The one-child policy has contributed significantly to two demographic shifts: the reduction in the number of working-age people and, through sex selection practices, the increasing ratio of male births. As a result, a current estimated shortfall of thirty to forty million females leaves behind an "army of bachelors" who are unable to find brides. In regard to the aging population, the percentage of people over sixty years old rose by 4.9 percent to 13.7 percent between 1990 and 2013. This aging population stresses an already "woeful pension, welfare, and health care system." [78] Yet another potential weakness is the dependence on income from exports. In 2012, the United States had a trade deficit of $315 billion dollars with China, while the EU maintains a deficit of another $200 billion with China. This exposes China to risks from an economic downturn in either the EU or US and also presents a weakness if tariffs increase. During a global financial crisis in 2007-2008, Chinese exports dropped from providing seventy percent as a share of its GDP to fifty percent following the crisis.[79] Additionally, an ongoing tariff war with the United States as

[75] William A. Joseph, ed., *Politics in China: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 283.

[76] Joseph, ed., *Politics in China: An Introduction*, 312.

[77] Ibid., 311-317.

[78] Ibid,. 274.

[79] Ibid, 393-394.

elevated Chinese concerns that a strong reliance on exports creates weaknesses that can be exploited and limit the ability to further modernize their economy.[80] Currently, China appears to recognize these vulnerabilities, and their officials have worked to develop economic reforms that seek to reduce income gaps, reduce dependence on exports, improve social welfare funding, and liberalize the financial sector to increase private capital. While China has implemented other plans as well, the free market will become a "decisive force" for the economy that will likely face resistance because of the effects on state-owned enterprises.[81] As implantation has yet to reach scale, the effects of this "wave of reform" have not yet proved evident; however, China's recognition of its reform needs indicates that it perceives the level of risk that a failure to correct the issues will pose.[82]

China's rising power undoubtedly contributes to other nations' negative perception of its intentions, which a long history of conflict and use of military force solidifies. However, this view provides an incomplete picture of China's recent approaches. In fact, China has varied its approach and has softened techniques to improve relations with nations harboring negative views. In particular, China's approach to the "Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) experienced tremendous change over the course of the past 15 years."[83] Since its formation in 1967, ASEAN has seen its relationship with China evolve from one of distrust due to security concerns with China's communist influence on member nations to one of guarded cooperation in recent years. Several key events have marked the evolution of this relationship. Improved Chinese-US relations during the 1970s, combined with US withdrawal from Vietnam, established

[80] The author in this source details that a heavy emphasis on exports for the Chinese economy has produced debt and an "over capacity" of production to support the export demand; concluding that the ongoing tariff war leaves China unable to sustain a long-term tariff war. N. S. Venkataraman, "Can China Afford a Trade War?," *Eurasia Review* (March 24, 2018), accessed April 5, 2019, https://www.eurasiareview.com/24032018-can-china-afford-a-trade-war-analysis/.

[81] Joseph, ed., *Politics in China: An Introduction*, 286.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ba, "China and ASEAN: Renavigating Relations for a 21st-Century Asia," 622.

China as the regional leader of security issues in the region. Although member states remained divided over Chinese intentions and compatibility with economic and security goals, ASEAN began to see the "necessity of dealing with China." [84] Continuing with its assumed regional leadership into the 1980s and 1990s, China persisted with its approach to use economic and political power to influence Southeast Asian countries. In 1989, it normalized Sino-Indonesian relations. This meant that China had now normalized relations with all ASEAN members, a significant political achievement. At the same time that the Cold War was ending, the United States "became less willing to support existing security arrangements without trade concessions" from its ASEAN allies.[85] Some countries viewed the decreased US involvement in the region as another reason to re-evaluate relations with China as a necessity to improve access to the growing Chinese economic markets. Even China's militaristic approach to the Spratly Islands in the mid-90s failed to significantly set back the improved relations with ASEAN. Although Vietnam and the Philippines viewed this action unfavorably, other countries saw it as "more 'boundary setting' than instances of Chinese expansionism."[86] China's trend to drive a wedge between the United States and ASEAN continues through trade concessions, debt forgiveness, and very positive reviews for the Chinese response during the financial crisis at the end of the 90s.[87] These political and economic efforts gave China a foothold in ASEAN through inclusion in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN Plus Three, and completed the evolution from its difficult relationship at the formation of ASEAN in 1967.[88]

The example of Chinese engagement with ASEAN illustrates how China adeptly leveraged its power, particularly economic, to demonstrate its strength in the region while

[84] Ba, "China and ASEAN: Renavigating Relations for a 21st-Century Asia," 625

[85] Ibid., 627

[86] Ibid., 628

[87] Ibid., 638.

[88] Ibid., 629

maintaining and even improving relations with previously skeptical nations. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that China's improved relations across nations reveals similar parallels to its relations with South Korea over the same time period. Although China remains a supporter of North Korea, its overtures to South Korea, including official recognition, head of state visits, and dramatic development of trade relations, has softened the South Korean view of Chinese intentions. It seems likely that China would use similar tactics to drive a wedge between a unified Korea and the United States, just as it did between the United States and ASEAN.

United States

US engagements in the Asia-Pacific region prove extensive, and Asia's rise has only deepened US economic and security interests in the region. Exports to Asia surpass those to Europe by fifty percent, and regional investments have doubled in the past decade, with China, India, Singapore, and South Korea" accounting for four of the fastest-growing sources of foreign direct investment." [89] Additionally, the region also includes choke points for maritime trade routes, namely in the South China Sea. Trade through these waters transports $5.3 trillion for the global commons, of which $1.2 trillion is attributed to US trade.[90] Security interests include five defense treaties and multiple partnerships that span the region, with additional support from multiple military bases in South Korea and Japan.[91] President Barrack Obama's "Pivot to the Pacific" addressed security interests in the region through a "strategic rebalancing of military assets," not only by shifting sixty percent of naval and air forces to the region but by increasing military-to-military engagements with a "wide range of close partners"[92] as well.

[89] Campbell, *The Pivot*, 5.

[90] Glaser, Bonnie S., *Armed Clash in the South China Sea* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2012), 4.

[91] Campbell, *The Pivot*, 5.

[92] Ibid., 15.

American involvement also boasts a lengthy history in the region dating back to 1844, when the United States forced a treaty upon the Chinese to open markets. Similar ventures occurred in Japan and Korea in 1853 and 1866 respectively. Although the venture to Korea did not produce a treaty or open markets, the actions did open Japan and China to trading opportunities.[93] US involvement in the following decades continued to seek influence and access to markets, ultimately gaining a key foothold in the Philippines following the Spanish-American War. Officials in the State Department and US Senate stressed the importance of this foothold as an economic necessity to gain sustained access to foreign markets. As one senator stated, "The Pacific is our ocean. Where shall we turn for consumers of our surplus? Geography answers the question. China is our natural customer. The Philippines gives us a base at the door of all the East." [94] Similar statements by the State Department echoed US interests to maintain security in the region for economic purposes. Moving into present day, current US objectives in Asia as outlined in the 2017 *National Security Strategy* (NSS) prove remarkably similar to those at the end of the nineteenth century. More specifically, the second pillar of the NSS includes priority actions that pursue fair and free trade practices as well as facilitate new markets to "increase the market base for US goods and services." [95] Just as the Philippines served as a "base at the door of all the East" many years ago, a unified Korea may offer the same opportunity in the future to meet the economic and security interests of the United States.

Although the United States has consistently maintained economic and security interests in Asia, the voracity and focus of the efforts to meet these interests have varied. This inconsistency has affected the relationships in the region. Militarily, the United States has

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[93] Unlike efforts in China and Japan, initial American attempts to contact Korean officials failed, primarily due to several small skirmishes between US ships and Korean forces in 1866 and 1871. The Korean resistance effectively turned back these expeditions before diplomatic contacts could be established. See Hart-Landsberg, *Korea: Division, Reunification, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 20-21.

[94] Ibid., 22-23.

[95] The White House, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC, 2017). 17, 20.

undoubtedly maintained strong ties with South Korea, but even this alliance has wavered. In 1977, President Jimmy Carter publicly sought to withdraw US troops from South Korea, asserting that the removal of forces did not mean a weakened commitment to South Korea. Reluctantly, President Carter reversed his decision in 1979, primarily due to domestic pressure from the military and Congress. Regardless of the intent to keep the US commitment to the alliance unaffected, "serious questions were raised"[96] and South Koreans seemed to draw two uneasy conclusions:

> First, it must have become evident to them that South Korea could not exert much influence in the formulation of major U.S. policies; the effectiveness of the Korean input was limited to how those basic policies were to be implemented once they were adopted. Second, they probably became convinced that the U.S. was keeping its troops in Korea out of its own strategic and security considerations in the area rather than because South Korea was pleading with the U.S. to do so.[97]

Although, this episode did not seriously damage the strength of the alliance, it was weighty enough to require aggressive responses from South Korea through what they termed "fire-fighting diplomacy" to address fluctuating commitment.[98] The senior US general on the peninsula, General John Wickham, had a front row seat to the South Korean perceptions during this time. In his book, *Korea on the Brink: From the "12/12 Incident" to the Kwangju Uprising, 1979-1980*, he pointed to his experiences with South Korean political and business leaders in the wake of the troop withdrawals. His perspective included a discussion with South Korean President Doo-hwan Chun in which Wickham mentioned possible troop withdrawals in 1981. During this discussion, Chun attacked him for raising the issue "in light of increased North

[96] William T. Tow and William R. Feeney, eds., *U.S. Foreign Policy and Asian-Pacific Security: A Transregional Approach* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), 83.

[97] Han Sungjoo, "South Korea and the United States: The Alliance Survives," *Asian Survey* 20, no. 11 (December), 1080, accessed March 10, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2643910.

[98] Ibid.

Korean threat" especially since previous withdrawals had shaken "ROK confidence in the durability of the American mutual security commitment."[99]

Economically, the US response to the Asian financial crisis of 1997 highlights a US effort to leverage economic power in the region. However, the United States focused support on South Korea and limited support to other countries in the region, excluding Indonesia altogether.[100] This helped open a door for Chinese influence to gain ground as China aggressively supported ASEAN members with financial aid. This resulted in the United States receiving "much criticism for not doing enough while China was praised."[101] Although the efforts improved US-Korean ties, it also signaled to other nations that they should question the reliability of US support. With this door open, China leveraged the goodwill it received from the response to the financial crisis into the ACFTA and inclusion in ASEAN Plus Three. In response to these developments, the United States proposed the Enterprise for ASEAN Initiative (EAI) in 2002. Designed to counter ACFTA, EAI included bilateral free trade agreements (FTA) as dictated by the United States. The impact of EAI was minimal, as "EAI conditions were too steep for ASEAN's weaker economies, thus excluding their participation. In fact, among the ASEAN states, only Singapore has successfully concluded an FTA with the United States." [102] Since EAI agreements were bilateral and included conditions that prevented ASEAN's newest members from participating, the proposal effectively ignored the collective nature of ASEAN.[103] Not only

[99] John Adams Wickham, *Korea On the Brink: From the "12/12 Incident" to the Kwangju Uprising, 1979-1980,* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1999), 120, xvii, 89.

[100] Blackwill et al., eds., *America's Asian Alliances*, 14-15.

[101] Alice Ba, "Systemic Neglect? A Reconsideration of US-Southeast Asia Policy," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 31, no. 3, 380, accessed March 11, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1355/cs31-3a.

[102] Ibid., 384.

[103] EAI conditions included the requirement for participating nations to be in the World Trade Organization and sign a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with the United States. See Alice D. Ba, "China-ASEAN Relations: The Significance of an ASEAN-China Free Trade Area," in *China Under Hu Jintao*, ed. Tun-jen Cheng, Jacques deLisle, and Deborah Brown (Singapore: WORLD SCIENTIFIC, 2005), 339-343, accessed March 30, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1142/9789812701107_0012.

were these examples ineffective, they also helped illustrate occasions when China has exploited US missteps.

Since the 9/11 attacks on US soil, the United States has placed much of its focus on the Middle East while, at the same time, China has focused on "bilateral relations with many traditional US security partners in the region." [104] President Obama's use of the term "pivot" to the Pacific marked a shift back to the region in 2011. Whether or not the pivot has resulted in any lasting, improved, and strengthened ties remains to be seen; however, it nonetheless indicates a recognition of the region's importance and US intentions to remain involved. The pivot's policies sought to increase US prestige and reputation in the region while remaining committed to institutions that promote free markets and human rights. Following the election of President Trump, US foreign policy shifted significantly in tone as US policy sought to level trade imbalances with the region, ultimately resulting in a high-profile tariff war with China. Initiated with the first tariffs in 2018, the current trade war has imposed tariffs totaling to over $250 billion on Chinese goods and over $110 billion on US goods. At the time of this monograph, both sides imposed a halt to additional tariffs while to allow talks to resume in order to find a resolution.[105] Although a solution and long-term impacts have yet to be fully observed, the dispute illustrates the intense competition between the United States and China. Although different in their approach, both presidents recognized the importance of a rising China and the potential threats to the region and US interests.

Secondary powers, Russia and Japan

Although other countries in the region will undoubtedly play a role in weighing the strategic impacts of Korean unification, they will play a secondary role to the primary

[104] Min-hyung Kim, "Why Provoke? the Sino-US Competition in East Asia and North Korea's Strategic Choice," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39, no. 7 (May), 984, accessed March 9, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2015.1035433.

[105] "A Quick Guide to the US-China Trade War," *BBC.com*, January 7, 2019, accessed March 30, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/business-45899310.

competitors, the United States and China. Russia, Japan, India, Indonesia, Taiwan, and Vietnam all play vital roles in the distribution and balance of power in the region. They cannot be discounted completely, but addressing each in detail would fail to reveal the major factors affecting unification and dealing with a unified Korea. Nonetheless, Russia and Japan share a unique history and geographic proximity that does require further discussion. Both countries also share a troubled past with North and South Korea, yet both have sought ways to improve relations. Furthermore, both Japan and Russia wield considerable influence in the region. Regardless of their improved relations and considerable power, looking further at these two countries shows they will play a secondary role to the United States and China during and after Korean unification.

Russian influence in the Korean Peninsula has waned, corresponding to the fall of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Consequently, Russian foreign policy has evolved, seeking to engage both North and South Korea to regain the influence it once enjoyed. During the 1970s, the USSR provided more aid to North Korea than did China, allowing greater influence at that time. After the USSR broke apart, its ability to contribute aid diminished, as did its influence.[106] Following the break up, Russian leader Boris Yeltsin sought to improve relations with Northeast Asia. Acknowledging a lack of viability to engage Japan effectively due to the Hokkaido Islands dispute, Yeltsin turned to South Korea by stating "South Korea would be Russia's leading partner in the region."[107] This effort ultimately failed due to limited Russian capabilities, internal rifts within Russia that reversed Yeltsin's goal of Korean engagement, and Korean apprehension to trust Russian intentions.[108] Although Russia's geographic location and energy resources present a possible avenue to assist Korea in the event of unification, it becomes hard to ignore that Russia's

[106] Harrison, *Korean Endgame*, 311.

[107] The Hokkaido Islands have been a source of tension between Russia and Japan since the end of World War II. Russia has maintained physical control of the islands since that time, even as Japan claims them as their sovereign territory. See Eberstadt and Ellings, *Korea's Future and the Great Powers*, 28.

[108] Ibid., 28-29.

efforts will fall secondary to the United States and China. This assertion raises the question about for whom Russia would play a supporting role: the United States or China? Russian history with China and the United States presents a difficult prediction to determine where Russia's support would fall. In the 2002 book, *America's Asian Alliances*, the authors make strong assertions against the likelihood of a strong military alliance between China and Russia but counter that some sort of cooperation will likely occur to reduce US influence in the region.[109] The authors paint a picture that describes how resistance to US regional influence will outweigh the tensions separating Russia and China in past years.

Japanese involvement in the region has been at times both dominant and problematic, putting Japan at odds with both China and Korea. Japan's brutal reign over Korea during the first half of the 20th century has left scars affecting the countries' relations to this day.[110] Similarly, Japan's conquests in China during World War II has sewn seeds of hatred between the two nations, which Chinese nationalism has kept alive.[111] Culturally, both Japan and Korea view themselves as culturally connected to China but widely disagree with the other's cultural interpretation of the connection. Japan views itself as taking the best from Chinese culture and improving it without becoming overly Western; and it views Korean culture as inferior, considering its people as "crude country cousins." [112] On the flip side, the Koreans view their culture as the "authentic heirs of Chinese cultural legacy" and that Japan is "copied and

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[109] Blackwill et al., eds., *America's Asian Alliances*, 7.

[110] During the period of Japanese colonial rule over Korea, numerous instances of brutality have fed Korean resentment of the Japanese. Korean workers were moved to Japan for work in factories akin to slavery, suppression of resistance with violence, killing over seven thousand people in one month alone, and forcing women into sexual servitude for Japanese forces, calling them 'comfort women'. The peninsula was used as a staging base to invade China, where similar atrocities occurred. See Harrison, *Korean Endgame,* 290-292.

[111] The Chinese Communist Party uses the liberation from Japanese rule as a sense of pride, while portraying Japan in the role of the villain. This has resulted in tremendous mistrust and even hatred of Japan which has not abated significantly since World War II. See Thomas J. Christensen, "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia," *International Security* 23, no. 4 (April), 49-80, accessed March 7, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/isec.23.4.49.

[112] Harrison, *Korean Endgame,* 290.

corrupted."[113] Resentment also developed during the years of rebuilding after the Korean War. A 1965 US-sponsored normalization treaty sought to increase trade and investment. This agreement faced criticism in Korea and created deficits with Japan, which reached fifteen billion dollars in 1996.[114] Japan has offered apologies and sought ways to make amends for its past misdeeds during its colonial rule of Korea, including during an official visit in 1998 when South Korean President Kim Dae-jung visited Tokyo. This visit concluded with both countries signing the Joint Declaration and Action Plan for a New Korea-Japan Partnership which pledged support for cooperation and a desire to overcome the bitter memories that have hindered their past efforts. These important talks also resulted in loans to Korean business, affirmation to co-host the 2002 World Cup, and cultural exchanges such as a joint study of their shared history. This agreement also included security cooperation to address non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in North Korea and the pursuit of more regular consultation on other security policy issues to "ensure peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula."[115] Even these incremental improvements, however, seem unlikely to erase the resentment and mistrust in the background of Japanese-Korean relations. This strained relationship leads to the conclusion that Japan could not confidently take the lead in any unification efforts nor effectively wield power and influence over a unified Korea. However, Japan could and would likely seek to support unification through economic and financial aid that assists with the predicted enormous costs of unification. This could prove as another step in the right direction to improve relations with the Korean people.

[113] Harrison, *Korean Endgame, 290*

[114] Ibid., 296.

[115] In addition to the positive talks in 1998, the relations suffered several set-backs due to domestic pressure in both countries. Also, North Korean continuation of missile testing exposed differences in their approaches to North Korea, Japan adopting a hard-line approach, while Kim Dae-jung continued the Sunshine Policy of positive engagement. See Chung-in Moon and Seung-won Suh, "Security, Economy, and Identity Politics: Japan-South Korean Relations Under the Kim Dae-Jung Government," *Korea Observer; Seoul* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2005), 569-571 and 577-579.

Japan impacts the region more so than does Russia in several areas. Aside from economic advantages that significantly favor Japan over Russia, historic Japanese relations with China and Korea create a delicate balance for the United States to navigate politically. Korea appears to more closely align with China, both culturally and economically, as the three Asian countries attempt to cope with their history of conquest and control of the Korean Peninsula. However, political alignments in terms of democratic government control connect Japan and South Korea. The pride of nationalism may prove a significant factor that the United States must keep in the forefront to balance the Korean-Japanese relationship effectively during unification.

Unifying Korea

The process involved in potentially achieving the unification of Korea presents significant complexity in both execution and discussion. The numerous means and methods to unify the peninsula make it challenging to simplify an understanding of the process and its outcomes. Therefore, categorizing unification logically becomes important. For the purposes of understanding the strategic impact of unification in the region and around the globe, one should clearly consider the type of government and economic system to determine how a unified Korea would behave within alliances and in the world's economy. To explain this, the following section first addresses two broad ways in which unification may occur: through either absorption or confederation as well as the dynamics between the two. Secondly, the section discusses how the unified government may approach international relationships via a China focus, US focus, or neutral stance. Historic examples of unification through either absorption or confederation can inform this discussion to help draw similarities and differences for a Korean unification scenario.

One can define absorption as either of the Korean governments assuming control of the peninsula through a variety of means including military action, peaceful agreement, or the collapse of one government. The speed or timeframe of absorption could vary greatly: rapidly, in the event of military action or a government collapse; or slowly, through a mutually agreed-upon

framework. For the sake of brevity, this study will assume that a South Korean-led absorption would most likely occur. While many generally accept that China would strongly oppose this scenario, the reality remains that a South Korean absorption would prove much more likely and therefore remains the focus for this unification model. Two primary reasons support this assumption. First, both China and Russia, North Korea's primary allies, have signaled a lack of support for existing security alliances. This severely hampers the political support North Korea would need to promote unification on its terms, especially through absorption via military action. In 1996, Russia stated that the security alliance between the former Soviet Union and North Korea "was 'inoperative,' prompting a revised agreement that included only a 'consultation' in the event of external threats to the security of either country."[116] Although China maintains an alliance with North Korea, its support has waned in recent years. A 1995 study that involved surveys with senior Chinese officials and analysts cited that they "insist privately that Beijing's leverage with Pyongyang has always been limited and that it has declined significantly since China established diplomatic ties with South Korea in August 1992," even though China's public statements say the opposite.[117] They further state that China "would likely consider military intervention only if it perceived Chinese security to be directly threatened or if the war had begun as a clear-cut case of unprovoked aggression by Seoul or the United States."[118] This narrows the military and political support for North Korea considerably, prompting a conclusion that its allies would abandon it if it were to provoke a war or if a violent collapse occurred, leaving it alone to fend off the superior forces of the alliance supporting South Korea. Secondly, the weakness of the North Korean economy would not support the significant costs of absorption. Numerous models and cost estimates for unification vary costs for absorption by required time for reconstruction,

[116] Harrison, *Korean Endgame,* 322.

[117] Banning Garrett and Bonnie Glaser, "Looking across the Yalu: Chinese Assessments of North Korea," *Asian Survey* 35, no. 6 (June), 528, accessed March 11, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2645707.

[118] Ibid.

sources of revenue, and goals of reconstruction. Estimates in these studies range from yearly costs of two hundred billion dollars for a period of ten years, up to higher estimates exceeding three trillion dollars.[119] Given that North Korea's annual GDP has hovered around only twenty-eight billion dollars for the last few years, it becomes apparent that the North Korean economy could not support absorption costs.[120] The net effect of North Korea's weak economy and limited support from historic partners helps validate the assumption that a North Korean absorption model proves highly unlikely. Furthermore, the magnitude of absorption in cost factors alone make the prospect a daunting task, even for South Korea with the support of its allies.

The post-Cold War German unification can provide lessons to apply to a Korean unification model through absorption. German unification occurred rapidly and at exorbitant cost, with over "one and a half trillion deutschmarks" spent.[121] Even at this cost, unemployment in the former East Germany reached seventeen percent one decade after unification, and the West German leader who spearheaded unification by absorption, Chancellor Helmut Kohl, was voted out of office.[122] This pessimistic appraisal of German unification ignores the daunting task the Germans faced; converting a socialist system to a capitalist one does not come easy. As difficult as German unification proved to be, Korean unification by absorption would start from a much worse position. The West German economy was roughly five times larger than that of South Korea, which will have to absorb a nation "larger in population and smaller in economic size"; and it will encounter a legacy of division "far more poisoned than the one faced by the Germans in 1989." [123] Confronted with this scenario, South Korean officials have supported a gradual form

[119] See table 1 of Noland, Robinson, and Li-gang, "The Costs and Benefits of Korean Unification: Alternate Scenarios," 802.

[120] Central Intelligence Agency. "The World Factbook," accessed January 30, 2019, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/.

[121] Eberstadt and Ellings, *Korea's Future and the Great Powers*, 210.

[122] Ibid., 260.

[123] Ibid., 74, 208, and 217.

of absorption to gain time and space for the process to occur deliberately. [124] However, they may not have a choice. In the event of a North Korean collapse, rapid absorption would be difficult to avoid, and gradual absorption would require North Korea to make serious concessions and relegate its authority, a prospect difficult to accept when it holds nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip. However, in addition to absorption via collapse, a possibility of absorption exists following the organization of a confederation, which this study will also address. Therefore, discussion of the additional absorption costs proves useful to apply to the relationships post-unification.

Although absorption by South Korea would likely result in the continuation of its form of government, the impact of embracing a population of over twenty-five million socialists without a history of voting behavior would introduce uncertainty into the South Korean democratic system. The risks of significant southward migration present a challenge to South Korea's low-skilled labor population and the organized labor movement, potentially impacting unemployment rates and putting the South Korean government at odds with its big business conglomerates, known as "chaebols." [125] More specifically, these chaebols might seek to take advantage of the new market in the North for cheap labor.[126] Socially, the introduction of democracy to a population accustomed to socialism, and vice versa, could cause a cultural divide within the nation, "with one side demanding to partake of the good life as compensation for their years of suffering, and the other complaining about poor work habits," a trend already developing within the population of North Korean defectors living in South Korea today.[127] Combining the currencies of the two nations, including the setting of an appropriate exchange rate and the expansion of welfare support to satisfy basic needs in the North, would result in high inflation rates affecting the entire

[124] Harrison, *Korean Endgame,* 96.

[125] Ben Kremenak, *Korea's Road to Unification: Potholes, Detours, and Dead Ends (CISSM Papers)* (College Park, MD: Center for International Security Studies at Maryland, 1997), 43.

[126] Eberstadt and Ellings, *Korea's Future and the Great Powers*, 213.

[127] Kremenak, *Korea's Road to Unification,* 43.

nation's standard of living. While German unification allowed a parity exchange rate that also increased inflation, the European economic system and Germany's positive economic reputation allowed the negative inflation effects to be socialized and "spread the cost of parity across the continent."[128] Economists, and even former German Chancellor Kohl, argue that Korea would not be afforded the same luxury because of the differences between the German role in the European economy and the Korean role in the Asian economy.[129] This doom-and-gloom picture is based on similar occurrences in German unification and presents the similar social, economic, and political challenges that could make South Korea a "mecca for disgruntled leftists and student activists."[130]

Another possible scenario for unification could be through the formation of a confederation. Both North and South Korea have actually proposed this concept in various forms, differing on the specifics yet generally backing plans in which both states maintain a level of autonomy but contribute members to an organizing committee that would direct cooperation in certain areas. However, the specific areas of the cooperative focus that each Korean nation has proposed are the opposite of the other's. For example, the North Korean plans generally focused on cooperating on political and security issues at the confederation level, while South Korean plans emphasized economic and social cooperation.[131] Most importantly, both countries' proposals focused on their respective strengths, with the ultimate goal of establishing a favorable confederation that leads to unification. The differences have narrowed since the first proposal in 1960, but both sides still seek confederation terms that would benefit their strengths and reduce the vulnerability of their weaknesses. This important characteristic points to the formation of a confederation merely as a means to transition, rather than as a feasible end state. This makes the

[128] Harrison, *Korean Endgame,* 98.

[129] Ibid., 98-99.

[130] Kremenak, *Korea's Road to Unification,* 46.

[131] Hart-Landsberg, *Korea: Division, Reunification, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 222.

pursuit of a confederation a de facto way to accomplish unification by gradual absorption. Assessing each country's differing proposals will demonstrate this assertion.

North Korea's first leader, Kim Il-sung, proposed the first confederation plan in 1960, championing a national committee, a combined military, and elections that would ultimately achieve unification.[132] In 1980, this plan became known as the Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo, which evolved significantly during the next two decades, shifting the confederation from a tool of transition to achieve unification to an end state in itself. Chairman Kim Il-sung and North Korean officials signaled this shift in 1991 during speeches and official visits. Official statements described the plan as a "loose confederal state" that would continue to maintain separate militaries and "independent economic and cultural relations."[133] This important shift occurred as the balance of power shifted on the peninsula; the 1960 proposal occurred during a time when North Korea possessed greater relative power, whereas by 1980, South Korea had taken the lead. In terms of GDP, both countries' GDP in 1960 was almost equivalent, at $3.7 billion each. However, by 1977, South Korea's GDP had reached $26.2 billion, whereas GDP in the North had fallen behind significantly, at $9.7 billion. [134] North Korea maintained a military advantage throughout the 1970s, maintaining superior force ratios (estimated 2.1 to 1 for tanks, 2.3 to 1 for artillery, and 2.3 to 1 for armored personnel carriers).[135] However, as a product of its growing economy, South Korea outspent North Korea during this time by $6.1 billion, allowing it to surpass the North in the 1980s.[136] The North Korean political system in 1960 also had advantages of stability, whereas South Korea's fledgling democracy appeared less stable in the wake of President Rhee's 1960 resignation that underlined his "repressive policies" and "election

[132] Dae-Sook Suh and Chae-Jin Lee, eds., *North Korea After Kim Il Sung* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pub, 1998), 77-78.

[133] Suh and Lee, eds., *North Korea After Kim Il Sung*, 76.

[134] Baek, *Probe for Korean Reunification*, 168, 235.

[135] Ibid., 235.

[136] Hart-Landsberg, *Korea: Division, Reunification, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 151.

shenanigans."[137] A military coup subsequently overthrew Rhee's successor, leading to Park Chung Hee's 1961 assumption of power.[138] Under President Park's leadership, South Korea began the transformation often described as a "golden age," which fostered its unprecedented military and economic growth. Although many political problems persisted, the growth established conditions for the evolving political system to reach greater stability. In 1992, Kim Young Sam was elected with the support of the middle class, "a creation of South Korea's 1980s economic growth," and began his program of "reform amidst stability," which sought to better democratize the government systems.[139] As the shift in power now favored South Korea, its views on confederation also shifted.

South Korea refused Kim Il-Sung's 1960 proposal as it was unwilling to negotiate from a position of weakness. President Park and others who strongly opposed negotiations believed in the slogan "construction first, unification second."[140] In one of his writings, he stated:

> Our sure way to ultimate unification is to place our political, economic, social, and cultural systems on a sound basis. This is absolutely necessary in order to create a nation with new property. It is essential to have strong political stability, a new social order, and the determined concentration of our power in the field of economic improvement in order to win ultimate victory over Communism.[141]

This slogan seemingly drove the strategy behind South Korea's approach to unification for any future negotiations with North Korea. Park largely avoided unification discussions until South Korea entered talks with North Korea in 1972, which failed over the disagreement of which unification issues to address first. The North pushed for reduction of military forces while the South prioritized addressing smaller issues first, such as humanitarian and cultural exchanges

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[137] Baek, *Probe for Korean Reunification*, 177.

[138] Ibid., 177-179.

[139] Hart-Landsberg, *Korea: Division, Reunification, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 180-201.

[140] Baek, *Probe for Korean Reunification,* 180.

[141] Ibid.

through a plan called the North-South Competition of Good Will.[142] As South Korean plans evolved throughout the 1980s, its approach remained consistent in prioritizing cultural and economic issues, but the key evolution occurred when South Korea signaled it was ready to negotiate on its terms with North Korea. The Korean Commonwealth Plan (1989) and Northern Policy (1988) both sought increased engagements with not just North Korea but also socialist countries such as China and the USSR. Under the Northern Policy, South Korea's diplomatic efforts established full diplomatic relations with the USSR, China, Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia, all occurring between 1988 and 1992. South Korea utilized these improved relations to push for official admittance into the United Nations, something China, the USSR, and North Korea had previously opposed. Gaining support from China and Russia helped insure entry for both Koreas in 1991.[143] South Korea publicly stated this as a shift to become more "welcoming of the North," but it also served the purpose of gaining a forum to isolate and weaken North Korea diplomatically.[144] Evaluating South Korean approaches to unification through a confederation shows its propensity to negotiate from strength, to capitalize on attempts to further open gradual relations with North Korea and, after transitioning through confederation, achieve unification. As President Park stated, "When our power surpasses that of North Korea, and when the urge for freedom moves from the Republic to the north of Korea, Kim Il-Sung's dictatorial system will surely collapse." [145]

These daunting challenges expose a need for international assistance during the unification process. Whether the process proves gradual or rapid, the costs will be significant and support from other nations required. This necessity will invite influence not only from nations with altruistic motives but also from those seeking to gain a competitive edge to influence a

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[142] Hart-Landsberg, *Korea: Division, Reunification, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 221.

[143] Ibid., 221-223.

[144] Ibid., 223.

[145] Harrison, *Korean Endgame,* 80.

newly-unified Korea. Regional nations will be especially motivated to prevent a potential crisis from spilling over the peninsula's boundaries into neighboring countries. This situation would present a newly-formed Korea with an interesting dilemma: how would two nations with different approaches to the outside world now act? Ben Kremenak, a fellow at the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, provides interesting commentary on this issue in his book, *Korea's Road to Unification: Potholes, Detours, and Dead Ends*; he highlights two important concepts that have impacted or characterized both national approaches to relationships with other nations as he discusses the terms "juche" and "segyehwa." North Korea used the term "juche" to communicate Kim Il-Sung's philosophy and has become an important part of North Korean culture and approach to relationships. Often translated as "self-reliance," Kremenak explains, the philosophy has shaped three areas, including international politics, national security, and independence of the national economy. Juche appeals to Korean national pride through perseverance during shared hardships and conveys a sense of confidence in the Korean ability to "stand up to foreign pressures, to chart its own course and preserve its self-respect."[146] The North Korean efforts to develop nuclear weapons provide a solid example of the juche philosophy to enable an ability to maintain national security on its own terms. Conversely, the term "segyehwa" translates to "globalization" and arose as a form of policy in South Korea during the presidential election of Kim Young-Sam. Kremenak states this term "does not ignore the nation's history of victimization at the hands of large foreign powers but weighs it against its positive experiences with the outside world."[147] The policy builds upon the economic successes of South Korea throughout the last few decades, with South Korea able to offer assistance to developing countries in Southeast Asia and the Middle East through construction projects and economic support. These improved capabilities have instilled South Korea with a sense of self-confidence to interact

[146] Kremenak, *Korea's Road to Unification,* 51.

[147] Ibid., 52.

effectively and meet in open markets where it "was no longer the 'shrimp among whales,' but instead found itself looked upon as a successful and envied mid-sized nation." [148] The commonality of nationalism in both of these approaches helps demonstrate that nationalism remains an important factor throughout the peninsula and will likely continue to affect relations after unification.

The evolution of both approaches to unification (namely, the processes of absorption and confederation) demonstrate that both sides recognize that a confederation would merely be a transition tool to achieve unification. As power shifted away from North Korea, it shifted from favoring a strong confederation as a means toward unification to that of a loose confederation as an end state with very limited areas of coordination. South Korea evolved its approach in an opposite manner, assuming that greater power would allow for negotiating a favorable confederation, exposing North Korea to social and economic reforms that would topple the government and force unification through absorption. Furthermore, nationalism has proven a significant factor in relationships both within and outside the peninsula, making it an important factor to address in further analysis. Although impossible to predict the exact nature of unification, it becomes prudent to further assume a South Korean absorption of North Korea to further narrow this focus of analysis. The following section will look at how a unified Korea through absorption may impact regional relationships.

Impact of Unification: Application of Theory

The previous sections explained a framework for balance of power and alliance formation, the regional dynamics in the Asia-Pacific, and what characteristics might help define a unified Korea. In order to determine how a unified Korea would impact the region, this section will apply the theoretic framework previously discussed to a unified Korea in the Asia-Pacific region. Under the basic framework for balance of power theory, this monograph posited that

[148] Kremenak, *Korea's Road to Unification,* 53.

nations have a certain level of flexibility to act in their own interest, primarily in the goals of maximizing power and security. When faced with a rising nation within the region, weaker nations have to decide whether or not to oppose that nation's rise, a decision primarily based on the rising nation's perceived threat. If a nation perceives a threat, that nation may decide to balance the threat or bandwagon with the rising nation. If a weaker nation does not perceive or mitigates a threat, it may continue to stay the present course and react if needed in the future. How the weaker nation perceives the seriousness of the threat and how it decides to act can occur in multiple ways. Nations may choose to balance or bandwagon, either comprehensively or selectively in specific areas such as economically, militarily, and/or diplomatically. Using alliances to bring stability is one of the primary ways a weaker nation may balance against a stronger one. The decisions a state makes to balance or bandwagon within a region can potentially affect the balance of power within the region.

Following the unification of Korea, one can surmise that the new nation will be able to maintain flexibility to act within its own interests. Although the rigors of unification will require significant intervention from outside powers to rebuild and/or provide security during transition, the history of the Korean Peninsula demonstrates that the political culture of both Koreas allows for this flexibility, even as a "shrimp among whales." Both nations have maintained strong ties to their respective allies and have often bent to their demands, but as the years have passed since their division, both have exhibited willingness to act on their own. The North Korean drive for nuclear weapons provides a long-term example of an ability to maintain a certain level of autonomy. Strongly tied to China, North Korea resisted Chinese efforts to denuclearize. Since the beginning of its nuclear program in 1963, North Korea has pursued nuclear weapons with only limited support. At that time, the USSR refused a North Korean request to receive help with a program. Nonetheless, the program began, using Soviet technology intended to support peaceful

nuclear energy programs.[149] The pursuit of nuclear weapons has caused significant diplomatic problems for China as it has attempted to balance support of North Korea while delicately applying pressure to prevent further provocations. China has supported efforts to denuclearize North Korea, including supporting UN Security Council resolutions sanctioning North Korea.[150] These efforts over multiple decades show how, even under tremendous international pressure, North Korea has maintained the ability to make independent decisions in its own interests. In South Korea, autonomy from US pressure proved evident in the Sunshine Policy, the term describing South Korean President Kim Dae-jung's approach toward North Korea. His approach departed from the US "adoption of a hard-line North Korea policy" and shifted South Korean policy to one of engagement through increased diplomacy.[151] This policy created a significant rift with US President George W. Bush, who famously declared North Korea as part of the "Axis of Evil" following the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. South Koreans desiring better relations with North Korea perceived Bush's hard rhetoric as harmful to the engagement efforts, resulting in significant protests during his 2002 visit to Seoul. Although many did not see the Sunshine Policy as a success, President Kim Dae-jung pursued the policy regardless of Bush's disapproval, an example of South Korea's willingness to act outside the interests of a historically close ally.[152]

States with a certain level of flexibility in international relations will also have the ability to determine a reaction to the rise in power of another nation in their region. As discussed, an

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[149] Harrison, *Korean Endgame,* 201.

[150] China supported UN Resolution 2094 to sanction North Korea, but also tried to soften the impact of the sanctions creating significant problems with enforcement of the resolution. See - Benjamin Habib, "The enforcement problem in Resolution 2094 and the United Nations Security Council sanctions regime: sanctioning North Korea," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 70, no. 1 (December), 50-68, accessed March 19, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2015.1095278.

[151] Choong Nam Kim, "The Sunshine Policy and Its Impact on South Korea's Relations with Major Powers," *Korea Observer; Seoul* 35, no. 4 (Winter 2004), 581-616.

[152] The rift over President Bush's rhetoric and South Korean efforts in the Sunshine Policy are discussed in depth in the following article. See - Seung-Hwan Kim, "Anti-Americanism in Korea," *The Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 1, 109-22, accessed March 19, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/016366003761036525.

important factor in this decision lies in the perception of whether or not the rising nation evokes a threat. In the Asia-Pacific region, China undoubtedly stands as the rising power that raises these questions for other nations in the region. The four factors impacting the severity of a threat as discussed include the following: power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions. As stated, China's rise has increased its power, both economically and militarily; combined with geographic proximity through a shared border, this power presents a potential threat if Korea perceives the intentions of China negatively. Korea could logically assume that China's aggressive actions in the Yellow and South China Seas could be indicative of a Chinese approach to Korean issues. Theoretically, these factors make it likely that a unified Korea would feel threatened with China's continued rise. However, Chinese actions in the South China Sea also demonstrated positive methods of engagement as evident in its engagements with ASEAN and the nations that the 1997 financial crisis affected, which may translate to a positive Korean perception.

Geopolitical considerations have proven significant in the Asia-Pacific region, and Chinese actions in the South China Sea, as discussed, demonstrate a willingness to use economic, political, and military power to influence the other nations. The mixed relationship of China with ASEAN and these nations' cautious approach shows how they have perceived a threat, yet competing interests within the ASEAN nations also warranted their cautious engagement of China. Furthermore, China's ability to mitigate this perception, primarily through economic and diplomatic means, helped ASEAN work through the contentious history with China, ultimately allowing them into ASEAN Plus Three. This example may apply to a unified Korea as well, as lingering disputes over the Yellow Sea oil drilling rights at one point involved China using armed fishing vessels to disrupt drilling efforts in a disputed area.[153] This close geographic proximity and resulting disputes create the potential for Korea's increased perception of Chinese threats.

[153] Harrison, *Korean Endgame,* 320-321.

However, China may be able to defuse this perception through economic incentives and diplomatic efforts that maximize its shared cultural heritage with Korea. For example, providing humanitarian support during the unification process to support destitute regions of the North would demonstrate goodwill; or exploiting the shared animosity for Japan while pointing to Korea's alliance with the United States could help pull it away from US negotiations. This presents an interesting dynamic: Korea will likely perceive the threat of China not as universal but as isolated to specific security issues that it can address through economic and diplomatic means. If Korea determines that China's rise proves problematic for its own national interests and determines it constitutes a threat, Korea will likely have two broad means to mitigate the threat. It may choose to bandwagon with or balance against China through alliance formation. If Korea chooses to parse the threat based on economic and security concerns related to disputed areas such as the Yellow Sea, it would garner a chance to flip between balancing and bandwagoning based on a specific issue. This ties to the theoretical framework concept that nations may fluctuate between bandwagoning and balancing approaches. Leveraging the competition between China and the United States would give Korea options with both nations. Vietnam's experiences in the South China Sea provide an example of this approach. Interestingly, Vietnam was a formerly divided country that unified and also shares a border with China. The severity of China-Vietnam disputes in the South China Sea exceed those in the Yellow Sea between Korea and China, but nonetheless, the Vietnam experience exemplifies the flexible approach between balancing and bandwagoning.

Vietnam has adopted a policy of "multilateralization and diversification," which advances a "soft balancing act among the major powers, particularly between the United States and China, to protect its national sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as to promote economic development.[154] This approach includes improvement of economic ties and

[154] Nguyen Manh Hung, "Vietnam in 2017: Power Consolidation, Domestic Reforms, and Coping with New Geopolitical Challenges," *Southeast Asian Affairs; Singapore* (2018), 415.

negotiations over disputes with China while simultaneously engaging the United States as a hedge with regard to security concerns due to the asymmetric relationship with China. US-Vietnam relations have improved significantly in recent years, including recent developments under the administrations of President Obama and President Trump, with economic agreements worth $12 billion to US companies and a pledge "to strengthen bilateral defense ties under the 2011 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Advancing Bilateral Defense Cooperation and the 2015 Joint Vision Statement on Defense Relations"; this joint vision statement included plans to acquire "defense equipment from the United States, including additional Coast Guard cutters."[155] Even with these agreements and relations ostensibly improved, Vietnam became concerned with the strength of US resolve after President Trump withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and made statements of a "special chemistry" with China's leader President Xi.[156] In response to this perception, Vietnam engaged China in 2017 to address the disputes in the South China Sea but failed to achieve any meaningful results. Even during this difficult period of relations, China and Vietnam improved economic ties through trade and tourism, increasing exports to China by "nearly 43 percent to $13 billion" and increasing Chinese tourism by sixty percent, which accounts for "approximately one third of foreign visitors" to Vietnam.[157] This approach has been termed the "cooperation and struggle" policy, which meant that "Vietnam would cooperate with any country for mutual benefit and Vietnam would struggle against any country that harmed or threatened Vietnam's national interests."[158] This definition fits neatly into the theoretical framework that allows states flexibility in alliance formation and presents a likely approach for Korea to apply as well.

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[155] Hung, "Vietnam in 2017: Power Consolidation, Domestic Reforms, and Coping with New Geopolitical Challenges," 419.

[156] Ibid., 417.

[157] Ibid., 423-424.

[158] Carlyle A. Thayer, "Vietnam's Strategy of 'Cooperating and Struggling' with China over Maritime Disputes in the South China Sea," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 3, no. 2 (July), 216-217, accessed March 20, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2347797016645453.

The Vietnam approach to both China and the United States indicates that security concerns comprise an important reason for the United States to remain engaged in the region; as such, security remains an important factor affecting the region's balance of power. Economic ties have proved important as well, yet they are typically negotiated through organizations such as ASEAN or through mutually beneficial bi-lateral agreements. Arguably, US presence in the region enables effective balancing against China. Since 1945, the security aspect of the US relationship with Korea has remained a dominant factor, a relationship that a unified Korea would likely evaluate, particularly in reference to the presence of US forces stationed on the peninsula. Should Korea decide to seek removing forces from the peninsula, it would leave the US presence in Northeast Asia in a significantly weakened position, with only the bases remaining in Japan as access points. This would directly impact US ability to project power in the region. As discussed, China's increasing military capabilities have extended the reach of its defensive and offensive capabilities in the region. If required to intervene in the region militarily, land-based forces would prove critical for the United States to sustain combat operations; the loss of bases in Korea would adversely affect this capability. Although the historic security ties with the United States and Korea make this a seemingly remote possibility, two factors could influence a decision to withdraw US forces. First, the United States has previously entertained the possibility, including President Carter's attempts in the late 1970s and President Trump's recent comments indicating the possibility.[159] During his campaign, then-candidate Trump advocated for the withdrawal of US forces from Korea, and although he softened after his election in attempts to reassure US allies, he has simultaneously continued to pressure for cost-sharing of defense capabilities such as a US missile defense system. Although his demands have not materialized, these examples demonstrate President Trump's willingness to re-evaluate the alliance with South Korea.[160]

[159] Tow and Feeney, eds., *U.S. Foreign Policy and Asian-Pacific Security*, 83-84.

[160] Lami Kim, "South Korea's Nuclear Hedging?" *The Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (January), 116 & 117, accessed March 21, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2018.1445910.

Second, internal pressures in a unified Korea could also impact the decision. Protests against troop presence are common in South Korea, and anti-American sentiment during recent decades has also seen a significant rise. Polling suggests that a decreasing number of South Koreans want to maintain a security alliance with the United States, dropping from eighty-nine percent supporting an alliance in 1999 to fifty-six percent in 2002. [161] At the time of that poll, approximately two-thirds of the population were under forty years of age, with no direct memories of the shared US-Korean sacrifices during the Korean War, making it likely for a continued decrease in support as memories continue to fade. Further aggravating the decreasing support for a US alliance, China's popularity in South Korea continues to rise. In fact, polls indicate that China has surpassed the United States in public opinion surveys. [162] These factors make it seem more plausible that a strongly nationalistic, confident, and unified Korea could push for US withdrawal.

As this analysis demonstrates, nations in the Asia-Pacific region have acted flexibly and in their own best interests with respect to alliance formation and within the framework of balance of power theory. The unification of Korea removes a reliable foothold for both China and the United States in a very important, geographical convergence of great power competition. Once unified, the Korean approach will likely be similar to that of Vietnam approach, flexing between balancing against or bandwagoning with China. Bandwagoning will likely occur in economic areas while balancing will reign in respect to security issues. The critical component of the status of US forces based on the peninsula will present a focal point for both China and the United States to maintain the balance of power in the region. Should US forces withdraw from the peninsula, China will be poised to leverage its ability to restrict US force employment in Northeast Asia.

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[161] Seung-Hwan Kim, "Anti-Americanism in Korea," *The Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 1, 116, accessed March 19, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/016366003761036525.

[162] Kim, "Anti-Americanism in Korea," 116.

Conclusion

The past year has included unprecedented events in relations between North and South Korea. In 2018, the leader or each nation met for three different summits, including a visit to the sacred Mount Paektu, the demilitarized zone (DMZ), and Pyongyang. Each leader's spouse even attended one of these visits, perhaps an indication of the leaders' congenial or forthcoming mindset. These talks appear even more exceptional considering that only two meetings had ever occurred between these leaders before this historic year. While, on the surface, summits like these often seem symbolic in nature and lack any substantive progress in relationship improvement, these talks produced two significant agreements: the Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula; and the Pyongyang Joint Declaration. These agreements included specific details and timelines for measures that seem strikingly similar to the South Korean approach for gradual unification. Agreed-upon measures include "family reunions, cultural and sporting events, and relinking cross-border roads and railways." [163] The two nations have already begun implementing some of these agreements, including a railroad's groundbreaking in October 2018. The most interesting and significant agreements have involved military issues, including the removal of mines and guard posts in selected areas of the DMZ, the specifying of a no-fly zone on either side of the border, and the cessation of certain military exercises. Since many of these agreements remain ongoing, one cannot yet reach a conclusion concerning whether they will take a firm hold and result in lasting change, yet the significance and unprecedented nature of these multiple summits and agreements prove hard to overlook when compared to the history of the separated nations. Will they fall apart, as other agreements have in the past, or will they mark the first stages of a pending unification?[164]

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[163] Aidan Foster-Carter, "North Korea-South Korea Relations: An Unprecedented Year, but Will Progress Continue?" *Comparative Connections* 20, no. 3 (January 2019), 73.

[164] The dates and specific agreements listed were included in the article cited in this footnote. See - Foster-Carter, "North Korea-South Korea Relations: An Unprecedented Year, but Will Progress Continue?," 71-82.

Answering this question may seem fruitless, given the numerous failed predictions of unification that scholars and politicians have extended over the years. However, these recent events emphasize the continual push toward unification, and ignoring the possibility seems just as foolhardy, especially since a unified Korea would have tremendous growth potential and be geographically located at the historical nexus of great power competitions. After applying balance of power and alliance formation theories to the Korean unification scenario, one may conclude that Korea will face difficult alignment decisions with respect to the competition between the United States and China. Regional dynamics indicate that economic and security concerns will play important roles in the regional relationships, with US involvement in the region introducing great power competition. As discussed, China's actions and ability to mitigate the perception of threat toward Korea will become paramount in determining Korea's alignment decision. Additionally, the ability of the United States to maintain a foothold in Korea will contribute to the credibility of US capabilities to provide security alternatives to countries seeking to balance a rising China.

Analysis in this monograph points to Korea's importance for the region and in respect to the great power competition between the United States and China. Given China's ability to flexibly adapt its approaches in the South China Sea to meet its national interests, it seems logical that China will be capable of effectively influencing a unified Korea. However, as the two Koreas have strived to meet their national interests of power and security in the region, they have proven throughout their history to pragmatically manage relationships, especially as South Korea in particular has evolved from a weak nation to an economically powerful and influential one. It therefore seems logical that China will seek to economically influence Korea to limit the US presence on the peninsula; at the same time, Korea will maintain a reasonable level of skepticism of Chinese intentions and maintain some form of security relationship with the United States in order to balance against potential Chinese coercive approaches to influence the peninsula. This approach would allow Korea to hedge its tri-lateral relationship with the United States and China

and will result in Korea remaining at a critical convergence of regional and global competition for the future.

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