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Korean Unification:  
Models, Conditions and Implications

A Monograph  
by

Lieutenant Colonel William J. Tetu  
Field Artillery



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School of Advanced Military Studies  
United States Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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## Table of Contents

<b>I.</b>	<b>Introduction.</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>German and Korean Unification.</b>	<b>5</b>
	1. German Unification Model.	8
	2. Conditions for Korean Unification.	12
	3. Unification Assessment.	23
<b>III.</b>	<b>United States' Strategy in Northeast Asia.</b>	<b>31</b>
	1. Current Strategy and Korea's Role.	34
	2. Post-Unification Strategies.	37
	3. Recommended Strategy.	40
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>42</b>
	<b>Endnotes.</b>	<b>44</b>
	<b>Bibliography.</b>	<b>51</b>

## ABSTRACT

This monograph determines the prospects for peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula and the implications of unification on United States' military strategy in Northeast Asia. The prospects for Korean unification are analyzed in the context of a Unification Model based on the German unification experience. The degree to which Korean specific historic/cultural, political and economic factors fit the Unification Model determine the prospects for peaceful unification of the peninsula and provide insights into the path and pace that Korean unification might take. The implications of Korean unification on United States military strategy in Northeast Asia are determined by reviewing present day United States regional strategy and Korea's role in that strategy. United States military strategic options in a post-Korean unification environment are reviewed and a recommended military strategy is proposed to support United States national strategic interests in the region.

Two conclusions are presented. First, the peaceful unification of Korea is likely to occur within the next five to ten years and secondly, the United States should retain a forward military presence in Northeast Asia after Korean unification. Analysis of the Unification Model indicates that deteriorating economic conditions in North Korea are likely to force the North Korean government to become more conciliatory toward social, political and economic overtures made by South Korea. The conclusion that the United States should keep armed forces forward deployed in Northeast Asia is attained through analysis of the historic and present day geopolitical relationships that exist among the powers in Northeast Asia. Factors that influence this conclusion include the economic interest that the United States has in a stable Northeast Asia and the distrust with which other Northeast Asians view the Japanese.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Glasnost and perestroika created the conditions that permitted German unification. Hungary opened its Austrian border and East German refugees streamed through both countries into West Germany. Honecker's communist government and the Berlin Wall were quickly dismantled and free elections were held in East Germany in March 1990 (1). The speed and determination with which the East and West Germans sought and achieved union exposed the soft economic and political underbelly of European communism and precipitated the lightening fast break-up and dissolution of the Soviet Union. Almost overnight, unified Germany became the dominant economic power in Europe.

Suddenly, the United States no longer confronted a monolithic or threatening superpower across the inter-German border and it no longer led a particularly unified or cohesive military alliance. The superpower based stability of the Cold War quickly gave way to fragmentation, revolution and instability on the European continent. Yugoslavia violently imploded. Formerly communist Eastern European countries actively sought membership in the European Economic Community as a path to economic prosperity but were summarily rebuffed by the richer nations of Western Europe. Caught unawares, the United States struggles to identify, establish and resource its post-Cold War strategies for Western Europe amid competing nation-state constituencies as diverse and unfocused as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Western European Union, the European Economic Community, the old states of the Warsaw Pact and the new states parceled from the former Soviet Union.

Ten thousand miles away from unified Germany in separated Korea, the United States faces arrays of historic and dynamic regional geopolitical conditions that are strikingly similar to those that currently beset its strategic policies in

Europe. Although Korea occupies a position only on the periphery of Asia, it is the historical nexus of regional power struggles in Northeast Asia between the Chinese, Japanese and the Russians. The Chinese and Japanese have each invaded and occupied the peninsula and disputes over which nation would reign preeminent in Korea was a contributing cause of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 (2). By virtue of its geographic centrality in the region and its maritime position astride the trade routes in the Sea of Japan and the Korean Straits, Korea occupies an important position. Korea thrusts dagger-like toward Japan from China and Russia and conversely, the peninsula offers an enticing north-bound invasion route into China (3). As Alfred Thayer Mahan suggested over ninety years ago, Korea guards critical maritime choke points that govern the flow of sea traffic in Northeast Asia from Russia and Japan to China and Taiwan (4). Korea has been the scene of the United States-communist great power confrontation in Northeast Asia and the United States' forward line of defense against communist incursions into Japan since World War II. Like Germany, post-war Korea has been invaded, divided and occupied by foreign armies and split into two separate nation-states with diametrically opposed and generally hostile political, economic and social systems.

The Cold War has produced forty-years of uneasy regional stability in Northeast Asia. The demise of the Soviet Union as a superpower will have regional impacts as significant as those that have occurred in Europe since 1990. Like Germany, Korea will someday unify as a Western-style democracy with a market economy. Japan, China and Russia may view with alarm a Korea with sixty-million people, a million-man army and a powerhouse, export-driven economy (5). The specter of re-armament to meet a real or imagined Korean military threat will taunt Japan, and given her past expansionist tendencies, haunt



Japan's regional neighbors. Koreans and Chinese, after all, feel to Japan the same enmity and distrust that the French and English once felt to Germany.

By tradition, culture and temperament the United States is Eurocentric. The American population, although diverse, is essentially of European heritage. The American political system is rooted in Europe and Americans speak English. Americans fight their wars and define their global strategies with a Europe first mentality. Americans are concerned about their trade imbalances with Japan, Korea and other Northeast Asian countries but have accepted similar imbalances with Germany and the European Economic Community with equanimity (6) and forget that after the United States, Germany, not Japan, is the world's largest exporter of goods (7). Americans do not routinely "bash" the Germans, British or French, but Japanese-bashing is pervasive.

Asians finance America's huge budget deficits and import more American goods than Europeans (8). Asian economies are more robust and are growing faster than are the economies of Europe and Asians themselves represent a larger potential market for American goods than do the Europeans (9). America is tethered to Europe by cultural and emotional bonds but increasingly her economic well-being and indeed, her economic survival, is tied to Asia.

The focus of this monograph is Northeast Asia. Its premise is that the regional instability in Europe caused by the break-up of the Soviet Union exists in similar and parallel manner among the countries of Northeast Asia--especially Korea, Japan, Russia and China--and that the United States can anticipate, dampen and even preclude the deleterious effects of regional rivalries, jealousies and historic animosities on America's own well being. To accomplish this the United States must develop a coherent strategy that considers regional power

inter-relationships without superpower confrontation and with a unified Korea as its centerpiece.

Because a belligerent Soviet Union no longer threatens United States security interests in the region and because the tensions between the two Koreas can be expected to lessen considerably does not mean that the United States should redeploy its armed forces and their stabilizing influence from the region post-haste. The recent loss of American bases at Subic Bay and Clark Air Force Base in the Phillipines coupled with continued hostility and volatility along the Korean Demilitarized Zone provides persuasive argument for a cautious approach to any redeployments from the region. Indeed, the United States, through its military presence, is the only nation trusted by Northeast Asian powers to maintain the economic, political and military status quo in the region (10).

Because a unified Korea is important to stability in Northeast Asia this monograph seeks to determine the prospects for peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula and the implications of such unification to the development of United States' regional military strategy. The prospects for peaceful unification are examined in three ways. First, a Unification Model is developed that is based on the recent experience of East and West Germany. The model considers similarities and differences in cultural, historic, political and economic parameters associated with the pre-unification Germany to determine if the model and its several elements are transferrable to North and South Korea. Factors that may mitigate against transferring the model from Germany to Korea are also examined. Secondly, the current and historic conditions and initiatives for Korean unification established as national policy by the respective political leaders of North and South Korea are examined to determine the degree to which they impede or assist the process of peaceful unification based on the German

model. Other issues that significantly influence unification but lay outside the realm of national policy are also examined. Thirdly, an assessment is made as to the likelihood of peacetime unification of the Korean peninsula occurring within the next five to ten years.

The implications of peaceful Korean unification to the United States' regional military strategy are determined in three ways. First, the United States' current strategy in Northeast Asia is reviewed and Korea's role in the viability of that strategy is analyzed. Secondly, a United States strategy in a post-unification Northeast Asian environment is proposed and military options to support that strategy are examined. Thirdly, a recommended United States military strategy for the region is presented.

## II. GERMAN AND KOREAN UNIFICATION

German unification is unique because it represents the first occasion wherein two fundamentally opposed political systems, communist and democratic, have united in a capitalistic and democratic system. As South Koreans continue to search for methods to effect their own unification with the North Koreans, it is likely they will turn to the German model for guidance. In fact, the current South Korean government has already adopted a policy to stabilize relationships with its adversary in the North dubbed "Nordpolitik," that roughly equates with Willi Brandt's "Ostpolitik" approach to German unification in the mid-1960's. Just as Brandt's "Ostpolitik" envisioned a series of small, but significant steps initiated by West Germany to accommodate East Germany (11), South Korean President Roh Tae Woo's "Nordpolitik" seeks rapprochement with North Korea through a series of social, cultural and economic exchanges (12).

Brandt's "Ostpolitik" and Roh's "Nordpolitik" each appeal to the

nationalistic instincts rooted in the cultural heritage and history of their respective peoples. This appeal is important because historic and cultural parallels exist between Korea and Germany that are particularly enlightening and on first analysis, a cause for optimism that Korea too might unify if it were only to follow the German model. North and South Korea, like East and West Germany, are bound together by a common language, history, culture, ethnicity and intellectual tradition (13). Since the United States-communist confrontation caused and sustained the division of both countries, it might reasonably follow that its absence in Korea would drive unification in that country as it did in Germany. There is validity to this reasoning but unfortunately, it may be overly simplistic; it fails to give proper consideration to political and economic factors that effect unification. In the special case of Korea, over-reliance on cultural and historic factors to project unification ignores the protracted and dynamic nature of the Korean conflict, the social isolation of the North Korean people and the political independence of the North Korean government (14).

To a great extent, German unification resulted from political serendipity -- the convergence of an unlikely, unexpected and particularly fortuitous set of circumstances that are not apt to occur on the Korean peninsula. For East Germans, daily contact with the West through television, radio, telephone and written communications with relatives was a pointed reminder for the East Germans that their quality of life and political freedoms suffered under the communist system. For the North Koreans it is not the same. The break-up of the Soviet Union has cost the North Koreans their most valuable political and economic ally but the peculiar nature of the North Korean regime allows it to survive.

North Korea is an extremely isolated country. Televisions and radios are

sold with frequencies pre-set and fixed to government stations and travel in and out of the country is tightly controlled (15). North Koreans display pictures of Kim Il Sung in their homes and wear his likeness on buttons pinned to their clothing (16). There are virtually no dissidents in North Korea and the country's only two established institutions--the Army and the Korean Workers' Party--are firmly under Kim Il Sung's control (17). Thus, the internal political pressures that contributed to the East German revolution are unlikely to occur in North Korea. North Koreans are simply unaware that a better set of circumstances may well beckon south of the Demilitarized Zone.

The cost of unification to the German people is expected to exceed \$700 billion over the next ten years (18). South Korea and West Germany built flourishing market economies and democratic governments while the command economies of North Korea and East German languished under communism. At \$210 billion, South Korea's Gross National Product (GNP) is ten times larger than North Korea's and the South's is growing at a significantly greater rate. West Germany's GNP was almost thirty times greater than the East's. Significantly, North Korea's population is approximately half that of the South's while East Germany's population was about one-fourth of West Germany's; South Koreans can expect to pay almost twice as much proportionately to bring North Korea to economic parity as West Germans are paying for East German parity (19).

The Koreans are superb imitators; they can be expected to scrutinize the political and economic lessons and consequences of German unification and apply them appropriately to their own condition. The ensuing discussion is intended to analyze the applicability of German unification as a model for the Koreans and make an assessment of the probability of Korean unification occurring within the

next five to ten years. Historical and cultural factors will be considered because they form a necessary background to the political and economic considerations that are the primary focus of the discussion.

### 1. GERMAN UNIFICATION MODEL

While the history of German political unification is relatively short, the country's cultural heritage is rich. German history reaches back over 2,000 years to an era of tribal homogeneity that formed the cultural basis of the modern German state (20). In A.D. 9, German tribesmen defeated Roman legions in the Teutoberg Forest and established the Rhine river valley as the neonatal land that would remain a loose confederation of kingdoms, duchies, bishoprics and free cities until the late 19th century (21). Not until Bismarck created the Second German Reich in 1871 did Germany become a united country and even that unity was ephemeral (22). Germany remained unified for only 75 years until the end of 1945 when it was divided by the victorious powers of World War II.

Historically, Germany's French, Austrian and Russian neighbors have been as eager to keep the country fragmented as the Germans have been persistent in their desire to bring the country together (23). Bismarck's firm belief that the French under Napoleon III would not permit a unified German state precipitated the Franco-Prussian War that was the catalyst to the formation of the Second Reich (24). Unified Germany's culpability for the two World Wars and particularly German criminal atrocities committed during World War II, caused the Allies to divide the country in 1945. The Cold War cemented the division. Although residual fears of latent German aggressiveness surely existed among Germany's European neighbors, the country remained divided primarily because of the United States-communist great power confrontation.

From the early 1960's through the late 1980's, Willi Brandt's "Ostpolitik" guided West German relations with East Germany. This policy was designed to reduce tensions by enhancing confidence, trust and mutual understanding between the two countries. Perhaps the most salient success of "Ostpolitik" was West Germany's recognition of East Germany that enabled both Germanys to enter the United Nations in 1972. Coincident with its recognition of East Germany, West Germany tacitly renounced provisions of the Hallstein Doctrine that advocated West German sovereignty over all of Germany, but kept in force as part of its Basic Law the provision that East Germany could opt for entry into the West German federal structure (25). "Ostpolitik" was conciliatory in tone and purpose and played a critical part in setting conditions for German political unification that finally occurred on October 3, 1990.

As important as "Ostpolitik" was in the unification process, it played virtually no role in the end-game. German unification came quickly on the heels of political and economic events that neither Willi Brandt could have imagined nor contemporary leaders could foresee. Certainly, Mikhail Gorbachev was surprised by the rapid collapse of East Germany and Helmut Kohl was caught off guard by the determination with which the East Germans sought surcease from economic hardship by their determined emigration into West Germany (26). Economic conditions drove German unification more rapidly than Kohl either desired or anticipated; it occurred at all only because of the exceptional chain reaction of events set in motion by Gorbachev's advocacy of glasnost and perestroika.

Glasnost and perestroika tacitly encouraged dissent in Eastern Europe and Gorbachev's restatement of Soviet security policy vis-a-vis Eastern Europe abetted revolution throughout the Eastern European Bloc (27). Simultaneously,

the Soviet leader misjudged popular pressures for reform in East Germany and the tenuous position of the East German government (28). East Germany was the most successful socialist state in Eastern Europe and the one thought least susceptible to radical change (29). It was thought to have a robust economy that ranked as high as seventeenth largest in the world and a stable government (30). Nonetheless, a flood of refugees, some 2,000 a day, left East Germany and transitted through Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Austria to West Germany after Hungary opened its border with Austria (31). This backdoor to the West unhinged Honecker's East German communist government and the peaceful revolution of September and October 1989 ensued (32).

Free elections were held in March 1990 and soon after, the inter-German border was opened and the refugee problem reached critical proportions. The freedom and affluence of West Germany still beckoned East Germans (33). They demanded that Kohl fulfill the West German commitment to German unity expressed in the Basic Law (34). Kohl first offered the East Germans generous terms for monetary union to entice them to remain home and rebuild (35). Finally, he agree to move unification forward into late 1990 from late 1991.

The tide of refugees streaming across the inter-German border was the critical event that triggered rapid unification; Kohl would have preferred a more gradual approach that would have unified the country by late 1991, but he and other West German leaders underestimated the economic desperation of the East Germans. Monetary union joined East and West Germany through the establishment of the West German Deutchmark as the single currency in both countries and was accomplished by extremely generous exchange terms. East Germans were able to exchange their Ostmarks at the rate of one Ostmark for one Deutchmark--six times the real value of the Ostmark (36). Monetary union



was expensive and the first real indicator of the cost of unification. Only after unification did the West Germans begin to appreciate the economic woes that beset the East Germans and the economic price they would have to pay for political union.

The West Germans established a holding company, Treuhandstadt, to divest of East German government-held assets. These assets numbered some 8,000 companies thought to be worth over \$400 billion. Treuhandstadt's charter was to sell these companies to Western investors to defer the costs of unification. Unfortunately, East German industries turned out to be woefully obsolete and their factories and equipment of little more than scrap value. Additionally, East German trade was conducted mostly with Eastern European countries; products produced by even the best East German companies have been unable to compete with Western products. East German assets initially appraised by Westerners at \$400 billion have so far netted the German government less than one billion dollars (37).

Unemployment among East Germany's nine-million workers is estimated to be around three million workers with perhaps four million other workers engaged in unproductive work. As East German plants closed because of inefficiencies, market loss and a lack of West German investment, jobs disappeared. Unemployed East Germans who once earned five dollars an hour working for the East German state now are entitled to \$44 an hour in entitlements from the new German government (38). Other economic costs abound. East German infrastructure in terms of bridges, roads and railways is qualitatively and quantitatively inadequate and the cost of moving the former Soviet Army out of East Germany is about \$15 billion (39). Germans will pay over \$700 billion over the next ten years to rebuild East Germany.

German unification was built on the foundation of German nationalism rooted in the common culture and history of the two Germanys. "Ostpolitik" created a conciliatory political environment between the two countries that inspired unification after the East German revolution of 1989. Glastnost, perestroika and Gorbachev's decision not to intervene forcibly in the Eastern European revolutions allowed unification to proceed external to any antagonistic great power issues. Finally, the large influx of East German refugees into West Germany moved Helmut Kohl to offer monetary union to the East Germans and accelerated the pace of unification.

A model derived from the German unification experience has cultural, historic, political and economic parameters. When this model is overlayed on the Korean experience, it provides insights into the possibilities of peaceful Korean unification occurring over the next five to ten years:

## **A UNIFICATION MODEL FOR KOREA**

### **I. HISTORIC/CULTURAL**

- A. Do points of contact exist between North and South Korean people?
- B. Does a Korean national consensus exist for unification?
- C. Do North and South Korea share a common history and culture?

### **II. POLITICAL**

- D. Is the political environment supportive of unification?
- E. Is there an absence of superpower confrontation?

### **III. ECONOMIC**

- F. Is South Korea willing to bear the cost of unification?
- G. Are economic conditions in North Korea likely to impel unification?

## **2. CONDITIONS FOR KOREAN UNIFICATION**

Both Koreas have been relatively consistent in stating their respective

conditions for unification since the end of the Korean War. North Korea's proposals to settle the conflict have focused on the single issue of United States' forces leaving South Korea as a precondition for negotiations on unification (40). Indeed, the political legitimacy of Kim Il Sung is tied to his pledge to liberate the South from "American imperialist occupation" (41). Built around this issue are North Korean demands that the United States and South Korea nullify their mutual defense treaty, suspend joint military exercises and agree to establish a nuclear free zone in Northeast Asia.

In May, 1990, Kim Il Sung presented a unification policy based on five points: 1) reducing tensions on the peninsula through the withdrawal of United States troops, 2) allowing South Korean dissidents to move freely across the Demilitarized Zone into North Korea, 3) cessation of South Korea's diplomatic initiatives with the North's allies, 4) a Korean-wide referendum on unification and 5) formation of a nation-wide united front under North Korean leadership (42). These initiatives are consistent with past North Korean unification proposals based on the withdrawal of United States forces from the peninsula and the requirement that the North Koreans assume leadership of a united Korea. Because these proposals do not adequately address South Korean security issues and because they presuppose North Korean leadership in a united Korea, they are unacceptable to the South Koreans.

For South Koreans, security and stability issues are of primary importance and a precondition to further progress on unification (43). South Korea's policy toward unification has been incremental and based on cultural and economic exchanges as a precursor to more substantive initiatives. In the past, the South has called for such confidence building measures as demilitarization of the Demilitarized Zone, mutual pledges between the North and the South not to use

military force to effect unification, and mutual commitments not to interfere in the domestic affairs of the other country (44). The South Koreans, ever mindful of the problems and costs besetting German unification, favor a cautious unification strategy (45).

Such a cautious and gradual South Korean unification strategy would create a Korean National Community built on mutual trust and confidence between the Koreas with a Community charter, a national assembly and other supporting political structures (46). This Community concept presupposes a certain liberalization in North Korea's political and economic systems that would embody democratic and free-market principles (47). The National Community strategy represents a step-by-step approach to unification; the Community's political bodies would discuss economic and military issues within a framework of confidence building measure such as intra-Korean trade and arms control (48). This strategy is not acceptable to the North Koreans. It does not provide for the withdrawal of United States forces from the peninsula and any liberalization of their political and economic systems has been anathema to the North Koreans.

While conflict resolution and unification are avowed public policy of both Koreas, the intractability of the conflict is its most enduring characteristic. Unification remains a cultural imperative for both countries caveated by the condition that unification is acceptable only when one system can absorb the other (49). Most post-World War II interstate conflicts have lasted about two to three years (50). The Korean conflict is in its forty-second year. It did not end at the conclusion of hostilities in 1953 and it has not significantly abated since the end of the Cold War in 1990. Despite conciliatory initiatives by the United States and South Korea--cancellation of this year's joint military exercises, Team Spirit, and the withdrawal of United States nuclear weapons from the peninsula

(51)--the conflict continues in various guises, overt and covert, economic, political and social just as it has for the past forty years (52). North Korea's refusal to allow international inspection of its nuclear facilities and its recent shipment of ballistic missiles to the Middle East belie the notion that the conflict is any less dangerous or volatile than it was during the Cold War. In the past, the conflict has survived the Sino-Soviet split, the United States-China rapprochement and the break-up of the Soviet Union; today it survives without the superpower confrontation that fueled it during the Cold War (53).

The conditions of unification as defined by the official posturings of the North and South Koreans are unlikely to effect unification (54). Rather, four issues that lay beyond the scope of either country's official unification policy will determine the pace and path of Korean unification. These are the cultural and historical bond that exists between North and South Koreans, the continued success of Roh's "Nordpolitik" (55), the continued deterioration of the North Korean economy and domestic unrest that is likely to occur upon the death of Kim Il Sung and the transition of power to his successor.

Korean culture has been an identifiable presence in Northeast Asia for two thousand years (56). Like Germany, Korea's genesis can be traced to disparate tribes that coalesced into integrated communities sharing a similar culture (57). By the fifth century, the Korean peninsula was home to three states, Koguryo, Silla and Paecheke that were to define the modern Korean nation. These states were eventually unified and ruled by the Yi dynasty in 1392 (58). Throughout its history, Korea has been victimized by its stronger regional neighbors. Chinese and Mongols regularly invaded and occupied the country through the eleventh century and Japanese pirates threatened the integrity of the Yi dynasty in its early years (59). In 1905, the Japanese fought and defeated the Russians

to determine hegemony on the Korean peninsula and finally annexed the country in 1910 and occupied it until 1945.

Korea's history as a unified country ended at the conclusion of World War II when United States armed forces occupied the country south of the 38th parallel and Soviet forces occupied the northern half of the peninsula under a trusteeship mandated by the Allies. The trusteeship was originally planned to remain in effect for only five years and was meant to facilitate Korean self-rule after thirty-five years of Japanese occupation. It never received the wholehearted endorsement of the Korean people nor the sincere political support of the Soviet Union and the Korean communists in the North. In 1950, North Korea, seeking to reunify the country forcibly, initiated the Korean War by invading the South. At the conclusion of the war, the country remained divided along the Demilitarized Zone--a 165-mile long intra-Korean border that is presently guarded by 1.5 million armed soldiers. The Korean peninsula was once again occupied by foreign armies--one American and one Chinese. Although the Chinese eventually withdrew their forces from Korea, the Americans did not, and Korea, like Germany, became a focal point of the Cold War. The Koreans, like the pre-unification Germans, are a homogenous people sharing a common culture and history that were artificially separated by the realities of the Cold War. Koreans continue to see unification of the peninsula as their natural destiny (60).

Roh's "Nordpolitik" is conciliatory in principle; it is not likely of itself to effect political accommodation between the two Koreas. Like "Ostpolitik," "Nordpolitik" is designed to build trust and confidence between two hostile nations to achieve gradual unification under a set of carefully controlled and anticipated conditions. In retrospect, "Ostpolitik" served primarily to lessen hostilities between East and West Germany to facilitate a unification caused by

a series of very rapid and unforecasted events. "Nordpolitik" has had the interesting, beneficial and perhaps, unintentional effect of further isolating a North Korean regime already suffering economically and politically from the demise of the Soviet Union. Most recently, South Korea used superpower detente and its own economic strength under the guise of "Nordpolitik" to assist its gradual approach to unification while further isolating North Korea (61). The South quietly co-opted the North Koreans in the political arena by gaining entrance to the United Nations, by receiving former Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev on the South Korean island of Cheju in April, 1991 and by exchanging trade offices with the Chinese, North Korea's last remaining regional ally (62). "Nordpolitik" has forced North Korea to be more conciliatory with the South. In late 1991, the North signed a largely symbolic non-aggression pact with the South and followed that act with an agreement to make the Korean peninsula a nuclear free zone--an agreement the North Koreans have so far failed to observe (63).

Total isolation of the North Koreans is not, however, in the South's interest nor is it an avowed objective of "Nordpolitik." The danger lurks that a North Korea without viable political and economic options might resort to military adventurism against the South (64). To guard against such a possibility, the South Koreans have enhanced their economic dealings with the North by agreeing to barter rice for North Korean cement and coal (65) and by tacitly agreeing to low level diplomatic talks between the North Koreans and the Japanese (66). Optimally, reconciliation between the two Koreas should come before reunification much as it did in the two Germany (67). Roh recognizes that a violent breakup of North Korea is not in the South's best interests (68). He is haunted by the twin specters of North Korean internal turmoil after Kim

Il Sung's death followed by a German-like border opening and massive emigration across the Demilitarized Zone into South Korea (69). Roh's finally tuned "Nordpolitik" is geared to prevent such an occurrence.

North Korea has so far survived its political isolation caused by the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Eastern European revolutions and Roh's "Nordpolitik" initiatives. It is less likely to survive the economic deprivations brought on by the inefficiencies of its unique command economy, the loss of the Soviet Union as its largest and most generous trading partner, its enormous delinquent foreign debt and the huge portion of its scarce resources that it spends on its military. North Korea is bankrupt. Its annual per capita GNP is estimated at between \$300 and \$500 and at less than three percent per year, North Korea's annual economic growth barely outpaces its population growth (70). Four straight years of poor harvests caused by a backward and overly centralized agricultural system have caused nation-wide food shortages (71) and the country suffers from scant supplies of raw materials and energy (72).

North Korea's economy is unique because of its emphasis on self-reliance or "juche." "Juche" is an economic development program based on a command economy that emphasizes independence and eschews outside interference. "Juche" is as important as Kim Il Sung's anti-United States policy in maintaining his image as a nationalist leader and the legitimacy of the North Korean regime. However, because North Korea is not endowed with a surfeit of natural resources and suffers from underdeveloped technologies, little or no foreign investment and the ingrained inefficiencies of its closed economy, "juche" appears to be a self-defeating philosophy (73). Until recently, the philosophical basis of "juche" precluded the North Koreans from trading with Japan, South Korea and other Western-style market economies; instead, eighty percent of North Korean trade



was conducted with the Soviet Union, the Eastern European socialist countries and China (74).

North Korea faces grave difficulties caused by the loss of its most valued trading partner, the Soviet Union. The Soviets provided over fifty per cent of North Korean trade and provided oil and other goods to the North Koreans on a barter system. The North Koreans were dependent on Soviet military equipment, particularly jet aircraft and air defense systems to maintain the readiness of their armed forces (75). In the past, North Korean imports from the Soviet Union exceeded exports by a margin of almost two to one (76). The difference, representing over \$1 billion in trade per year, was provided to North Korea by the Soviets in terms of indirect assistance. North Korean trade with China, currently running at about \$500 million per year can be expected to increase by about twenty per cent to make up for some of the lost trade with the Soviet Union. Still, North Korea faces a serious shortfall in annual revenues of over \$1 billion as a direct result of the breakup of the Soviet Union (77). Compounding North Korea's difficulties is that what little remains of the Soviet trade takes place between the North Koreans and the Russians or the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Russians and the Commonwealth demand hard cash--another scarce commodity in North Korea (78).

North Korea's outstanding foreign debt amounts to about \$6.8 billion, \$2 billion of which is owed to Western democracies and over \$4 billion of which is owed to China and the former Soviet Union (79). This debt is a legacy from the 1970's when North Korea made a grandiose attempt to modernize its industries and to upgrade its technological base through massive infusions of foreign investment (80). The attempt ended in failure. North Korean finished products lacked competitiveness on the international market and the second oil

shock sent world-wide demand for North Korean minerals plummeting (81). Unable to service its debt because of sagging exports, North Korea simply stopped paying. North Korea's credibility in the international community has suffered accordingly (82).

Heavy defense spending further plagues the North Korean economy. While North Korea maintains a substantial quantitative military advantage over South Korea, it does so at a tremendous cost to its economy and the standard of living of its people. At twenty-one percent of its GNP, North Korea's defense spending is almost five times that of South Korea's in terms of GNP (83). To maintain their quantitative military advantage without the assistance of the Soviet Union the North Koreans will either have to commit an even greater portion of their already scant domestic product to defense or win assistance from China. The Chinese, of course, are beset with domestic problems of their own and are unable to provide much in the way of economic assistance to the North Koreans (84). Because the Chinese are courting economic investment and advantage from South Korea and the United States, they are also unlikely to provide the military wherewithal to support the North's sometimes extreme policies toward South Korea and the United States (85). In the past, North Korea's heavy emphasis on defense spending has constrained its ability to upgrade its people's living standard and sustain solid economic growth. Without the assistance of China and the Soviet Union, this situation is likely to worsen and place increased strain on the economy.

Economic reality has caught up with the North Koreans leaving them with few options except to adopt economic reforms to secure foreign assistance in terms of technology, investment and outright aid (86). While their economy contracts, their domestic defense expenditures must increase if they are to

maintain their advantage over the South. The North faces the dilemma that the contact with the Western-style market economies necessitated by North Korea's dire economic situation will further damage its already brittle system (87). Based on North Korea's poor international credit rating, foreign investors are likely to demand significant control of their investments and access to them through active participation in the North Korean economy. Penetration of the North Korean economy by foreign investors is likely to engender considerable liberalization of the social and political structures in North Korea as well as within the economy itself. "Juche," the philosophical basis of the North's economic and political structures, may be undermined and Kim Il Sung's image as a nationalist leader may be damaged.

Kim Il Sung has selected his son, Kim Jong Il, to succeed him in power in a hereditary succession that is unique among communist nations. The younger Kim has already succeeded his father as commander-in-chief of the armed forces and has received considerably more attention in the North Korean press than he has in the past (88). The media have constructed a cult of personality and image around Kim Jong Il that rivals that of Kim Il Sung (89). Kim Il Sung has spent the last decade preparing his son to lead the country and has tried to organize the country's political, economic and social structures to support the younger Kim (90). As long as Kim Il Sung is alive, Kim Jong Il's position as the designated successor to his father remains secure. Leadership conflict may occur after Kim Il Sung's death (91).

Kim Jong Il certainly does not command the respect that is accorded his father by the ruling elites in North Korea. Indeed, Kim Jong Il has been implicated in the bombing of KAL Flight 858 in 1987 and is thought to waiver between irrationality and rationality, pragmatism and dogmatism and recklessness

and sensitivity (92). Kim Il Sung is a patriot who commands obedience in the Korean Workers' Party and the Korean People's Army--obedience that Kim Jong Il will not necessarily receive (93). Resistance to Kim Jong Il may be increased substantially by economic hardship and food shortages and there are indications in the North Korean media that some military officers disapprove of Kim's policies of using soldiers in civilian functions such as agriculture and construction at the expense of military training and readiness (94).

Additionally, both Kims may be experiencing difficulties keeping loyalty and discipline among younger North Koreans (95). The North Korean media have recently suggested that positive attitudes toward sacrifice in the midst of the country's economic woes are simply not present in the younger generations as they have been in the past (96). Kim Il Sung's solution to past economic difficulties has been to increase the labor supply by exhorting the people to work longer and harder. But a Kim Il Sung inspired "200-Day Battle" to increase production by increasing labor failed in 1989, suggesting that the North Korean people may desire a more systemic change (97). It seems unlikely that Kim Jong Il will be able to inspire the population in an area where the "Great Leader" himself has failed.

Kim Il Sung is over eighty years old and has ruled North Korea since 1946. North Korea has never experienced a leadership change and Kim Il Sung's success in centralizing power has left the country's ruling institutions weak and ineffective (98). The Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party has had little stability over the years and even less governing responsibility (99). In order to maintain his own dominating influence and enhance that of his son, Kim Il Sung has constantly shuffled its membership (100). Kim has frequently replaced senior members of the Committee and restocked it with relatively

powerless younger members presumed to be loyal to Kim Jong Il (101). As a result of Kim Il Sung's policies, the Central Committee has little structural stability and virtually no power (102).

While there is scant evidence of any organized opposition to Kim Jong Il, the country's lack of experience with leadership change, the unusual nature of a hereditary succession in a communist nation and the immature state of the Korean Workers' Party as a decision making body may combine with the deteriorating economy to cause domestic turmoil when Kim Il Sung dies. Kim Jong Il will have no organized political structures from which to derive his power; like his father, Kim Jong Il may have to depend on his image as a national leader and a personality-driven cult of selected followers to survive as the leader of North Korea. That Kim Jong Il may succeed in this effort is problematical; what is more certain is that the nature of the North Korean economy will cause Kim Il Sung's successor, whomever it may be, to adopt economic and political reforms to meet the basic needs of the North Korean people.

### 3. UNIFICATION ASSESSMENT

The Unification Model for Korea is a useful tool in assessing the potential for peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula in the next five to ten years. Based on the German unification experience, the model represents critical historical, cultural, political and economic parameters that when analyzed in the Korean context provide insight into the pace and path that Korean unification is apt to follow.

### Historic/Cultural Parameters

Korea's history as a unified nation is longer than that of Germany and like the Germans, the Koreans share an ancient culture that dates back over two millennium. However, because of North Korea's self-imposed isolation, points of contact that might otherwise sustain historically-based cultural cohesiveness between North and South Korea do not exist. Family visits between North and South Koreans do not occur and television, radio, telephone or written communications between North and South Koreans are not permitted as they were between East and West Germans. The nature of their isolation is such that few North Koreans are even aware that a man has landed on the moon and North Korean students that have defected to the South have expressed amazement over such mundane South Korean political freedoms as street demonstrations and open criticism of political leaders (103). In the past fifty years North Koreans have developed a distinctive life style based on an autocratic Stalinist mindset that may well have significantly weakened their cultural ties to the South Koreans (104). Today's North Korean culture may have little in common with the South except its language and Confucian heritage (105). Perhaps the strongest cultural bias favoring unification in Korea is found among the 5 million North Korean refugees living in South Korea that have relatives in the North (106).

In contrast to the North Koreans, East Germans were well aware of the relative differences in economic prosperity and political freedoms that existed between their country and West Germany. Twenty years of "Ostpolitik," family visits, intra-German trade and access to the television and radio signals of the West made West Germany a desirable and sought-after alternative for East Germans and served to sustain the commonality of their German history and culture. Indeed, when the opportunity occurred for East Germans to emigrate

to West Germany they did so in droves and when political and economic reforms became viable options for the East Germans, they initiated their peaceful revolution of 1990 and sought unity with West Germany.

Both North and South Korea have established unification as national priorities. Unresolved disagreements exist between the national governments as to the processes under which unification should occur and the end product of that unification. Still, both Kim Il Sung and Roh Tae Woo agree that unification of the peninsula is their ultimate goal (107). Kim Il Sung understandably opposes a German-style unification because of fears that North Korea will be absorbed by the South and perhaps also because he fears retribution from the North Korean people just as Erich Honecker now fears the wrath of the former East German population (108). Roh Tae Woo also opposes a German-style unification because of the economic hardship it would bring to South Korea. South Korea is well aware of the economic and social costs of German unification and is anxious to mitigate unification costs through a go-slow approach based on "Nordpolitik" initiatives. "Nordpolitik" is based on "Ostpolitik," the West German approach to German unification, but compared to "Ostpolitik," "Nordpolitik" is a relatively new strategy. "Ostpolitik's" contribution to German unification was twenty years in the making; "Nordpolitik" has already had significant effects in making the North Koreans less belligerent in their approach to unification issues and these effects can be expected to increase over time. Just as Brandt's "Ostpolitik" formed a unification consensus among Germans, Roh's "Nordpolitik" initiatives represent Korea's most promising approach to forming and sustaining a Korean national consensus for unification.

Of themselves, the historic/cultural parameters associated with the Unification Model do not support Korean unification to the same extent to which

they supported German unification. Although North and South Korea share a common history as did the East and West Germans, the North has been far more isolated from the South than was East Germany from West Germany. This isolation has resulted in two distinct Korean cultures that share only a common language and religious heritage. The East and West Germans were able to communicate with each other relatively freely and sustain the commonality of their culture. Unlike the Germans, the Koreans have few points of contact that support unification from a historic/cultural context. "Nordpolitik" is Roh's strategy for building a national consensus for Korean unification. Over time, "Nordpolitik" can be expected to have similar effects on Korean unification as did "Ostpolitik" on German unification. By building a national consensus for unification, "Nordpolitik" contributes positively to the historic/cultural parameters associated with the Unification Model.

#### Political Parameters

In Germany, "Ostpolitik" established a political environment wherein political, economic and social intercourse between East and West Germany occurred on a routine basis. By the time that glasnost and perestroika became operative policies of the Soviet Union, East and West Germany had already established the political basis under which unification could proceed. "Ostpolitik" formed the conciliatory basis through which the East and West Germans communicated at the national level and the West German Basic Law provided the legal structure through which East Germany could join the Federal Republic. The absence of superpower confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union--as exemplified first by glasnost and perestroika and then by the break-up of the Soviet Union--allowed unification to proceed at a faster



pace than envisioned by "Ostpolitik." In Germany, "Ostpolitik" had nurtured unification for over twenty years so that when the superpower confrontation between the Soviets and Americans ceased to exist, the Germans had in place the political structures that were supportive of unification.

The same cannot be said of the Koreans. Although both Koreas have made unification a national priority, the current political environment is not supportive of unification. Neither nation appears willing to deviate from its official unification policy and compromise does not seem likely in the near future. "Nordpolitik" is only beginning to have the conciliatory effects on North-South Korean relations that "Ostpolitik" had on East-West German relations. Given the historic and current animosity that exists between the Koreas, it is not surprising that the absence of superpower confrontation on the Korean peninsula has not been the catalyst to unification that it was in Germany.

The political parameters associated with the Unification Model are not supportive of Korean unification in the near future. The conflict between the two Koreas continues unabated and the political environment seems likely to change and become supportive of sincere unification efforts only as Roh's "Nordpolitik" initiatives mature. Without a political environment supportive of unification, the absence of superpower confrontation on the peninsula has little effect on unification. Kim Il Sung maintains his image as a nationalist leader based on his anti-Americanism and his insistence that United States forces leave the peninsula irrespective of superpower confrontation. The political equation may well change upon Kim's death; a less dogmatic North Korean leadership may be more conciliatory to South Korean unification initiatives. In Germany, political structures were in place to support unification in the absence of superpower confrontation; this is not yet the case in Korea.

### Economic Parameters

Economic considerations drove East Germans to emigrate to West Germany when the Hungarians opened their Austrian border. At the time, the East German economy was thought to be among the twenty largest in the world and the most successful of the East European socialist states (109). That East Germans continued their flights to the West until well after their peaceful revolution in March 1990 indicates the critical importance that economic considerations played in the decision making process by which East Germans determined to leave their country. To stop the flow of refugees into West Germany, Kohl was required to offer monetary unification on exceedingly generous terms to the East Germans, to accelerate the pace of unification and to commit substantial West German resources to rebuild the East German economy. In Germany, historic, cultural and political parameters facilitated unification; the dire economic conditions of East Germany and the willingness of the West Germans to underwrite the substantial costs of unification were the driving forces behind unification.

As in Germany, economic considerations will push the Koreans to unification. Arguably, the North Korean economy, beset as it is with external debt, decreasing trade, poor agricultural production, a demanding defense establishment and obsolete technologies, is in much worse shape than that of pre-unification East Germany. To provide its people with the bare necessities of life --food, clothing and shelter--and perhaps also to maintain the legitimacy of its rule, the North Korean government has already been forced to turn outward to the Western-style market economies for economic support. This trend is likely to continue and cause liberalization of the North's economy accompanied by

similar effects on the North's political and social structures that will lead to a more conciliatory North Korean position on unification. While a German-style mass emigration of North Koreans across the Demilitarized Zone into South Korea cannot be ruled out, it is unlikely. The Demilitarized Zone is heavily guarded by both Koreas, neither of which see a mass emigration to their benefit, and the isolated North Korean people probably do not see in South Korea the same economic opportunities that the East Germans saw in West Germany. Thus, economic conditions in North Korea are likely to impel unification by making the North more receptive to South Korean unification efforts expressed through "Nordpolitik."

Korean unification is likely to cost the South Koreans in excess of \$300 billion (110). This is only about half the cost of German unification but it represents over four times the \$700 billion German cost in terms of real GNP. \$700 billion represents only about four months of Germany's GNP but \$300 billion is eighteen months of South Korea's GNP. The South Koreans are apt to balk at this cost but, as in Germany, the historic/cultural imperatives for unification are likely to supersede concerns over the cost to the South Koreans. Indeed, Roh's government is already searching out ways to pay for unification. North-South trade has increased substantially since 1989 and Roh has already set up a task force of senior ministers to plan the financial resourcing of unification (111). Additionally, the non-aggression pact signed by both Koreas in February of this year provides for an economic commission to study means by which the economies of the two countries can be balanced and integrated (112). That the South Korean government is actively seeking means to pay for unification indicates a propensity to pay costs as they come due.

The peaceful unification of Korea is likely to occur within the next five

to ten years. As they did in Germany, the economic parameters associated with the Unification Model are apt to be the driving force toward Korean unification. Economic conditions in North Korea are such that they are likely to impel unification and the South Koreans have already indicated a willingness to pay the associated costs. The deteriorating North Korean economy will force Kim Il Sung--or his successors--to seek outside assistance from the Western-style market economies, particularly South Korea, thus forcing a liberalization of the North Korean economy and its related political and social structures. The North should then become more receptive to South Korean unification initiatives expressed through "Nordpolitik." The South is actively planning and resourcing the means by which they will pay for unification and has already begun discussions with the North to fully integrate the North's economy into the South's.

The historic/cultural and political parameters associated with the Unification Model are not as significant in the Korean context as they were in the German context. Fifty years of social and political isolation may have created a distinct North Korean culture that has little in common with the South Korean culture save language, religion and history. Points of contact between North and South Koreans do not exist as they did between East and West Germans. Nonetheless, the North and South do share a common history, the remnants of a common culture and a significant portion of the South Korean population has roots or relatives in the North. These considerations, along with official governmental policies of both North and South Korea that endorse unification, provide a national Korean consensus for unification. While not strong enough of themselves to drive unification, historic/cultural considerations analyzed within the context of the Unification Model are sufficiently extant to support Korean unification.

The political parameters associated with the Unification Model have not yet matured in the Korean context. The official unification positions of North and South Korea are not supportive of a conciliatory political environment and the protracted nature of the Korean conflict has made the absence of superpower conflict on the peninsula much less significant than was the case in Germany. Roh's "Nordpolitik," representing the Korean equivalent of German "Ostpolitik," is the most promising political initiative to developing a conciliatory political environment between the two Koreas that will support unification. Within five to ten years, "Nordpolitik" is likely to mature into a mutually acceptable national unification policy for both Koreas just as "Ostpolitik" did for the two Germans. Of course, Kim Il Sung's death and a subsequent power struggle over leadership succession in North Korea may either accelerate or decelerate this process. Still, at some point in the next five to ten years the political parameters associated with the Unification Model can be expected to become supportive of unification.

### III. UNITED STATES' STRATEGY IN NORTHEAST ASIA

The strategic uncertainty presently seen in Europe caused by the break-up of the Soviet Union and the unification of Germany can be expected to be replicated in Korea and Northeast Asia. Just as the forward deployment of Soviet forces in East Germany provided the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United States a *raison d'être* for military strategy in Europe, so does the forward deployment of the North Korean People's Army along the Demilitarized Zone provide focus for United States' military strategy in Northeast Asia. Once Germany achieved unification and the Soviet Union began to disintegrate, the United States began reassessing its role and military commitment to Western Europe. Indeed, the United States rather quickly withdrew a significant portion

of its deployed forces from Europe and is currently engaged in a national debate to determine the fate of the remaining United States forces in Europe. In Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is providing the United States with important institutional support to maintain a significant military presence in the region. In Northeast Asia there is no such institutional support, although a United States military trans-Pacific link is perhaps more critical for a stable environment in Northeast Asia than is the trans-Atlantic link for European stability.

Supporting institutions of a regional nature do not exist between Northeast Asian countries and the United States as they do in Europe. There is no Asian equivalent of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization nor are there multilateral regional organizations such as the European Economic Community and the Western European Union. The Conventional Forces in Europe and the Confidence and Security Building Measures talks do not exist in like form in Asia. Instead, the United States has a variety of bilateral agreements, military and economic, with Japan, Korea and other smaller countries in Asia designed to support its strategy. The United States strategic relationship with Western Europe is based on multilateral agreements--particularly the North Atlantic Treaty Organization--while its relationship with the countries of Northeast Asia is supported by a series of separate and distinct bilateral agreements.

The fledgling Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation process probably represents the region's most promising effort at developing a multilateral institution dedicated to fostering mutual security and economic interests but the diversity and asymmetry of the region's cultures hampers its effort (113). The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a loose conglomerate of lesser states remains the only Asian organization to successfully promote governmental

cooperation among its member states (114). In general, cultural diversity, disparate economic statuses and geographic separation have conspired to prevent the creation of effective multilateral organizations in Northeast Asia (115). Whereas the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Economic Community unite European nations in common cause, the nations of Northeast Asia remain dissimilar, fragmented and distrustful of each other (116). The lack of multilateral security relationships among Asian nations combined with historically-based fears of Japanese expansionism and the web of present day animosities that exists between and among the Japanese, Russians, Chinese and Koreans make post-Cold War Northeast Asia a potentially unstable and therefore dangerous region (117).

Stability in Northeast Asia is important to the United States because of the economic interdependence that currently exists between the Northeast Asian powers and the United States. Two-way trade between the United States and Northeast Asia continues to outstrip United States trade with Europe and Northeast Asians import over twenty percent of United States exports (118). Additionally, Northeast Asian money in the form of direct investment in the United States is contributing to the revitalization of American industry and technology (119). Based on economic considerations only, the United States has critical national interests in maintaining the geopolitical balance of power in Northeast Asia among the Japanese, Russians, Chinese and Koreans and most Northeast Asians want the United States to continue its balancing role (120).

Once Korea unifies, the United States ought to anticipate similar difficulties in defining its role in Northeast Asia as it has experienced in Europe. Because a multilateral organization like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization does not exist in Northeast Asia, the United States and the regional powers lack

institutional means to express security concerns on a regional basis. It thus becomes all the more important for the United States to clearly delineate its military strategy in Northeast Asia in a post-Korean unification environment.

### 1. CURRENT STRATEGY AND KOREA'S ROLE

Current United States strategy in Northeast Asia focuses on keeping the sea lines of communications between the United States and Northeast Asia open and defending Korea and Japan (121). Other strategic goals include enhancing and supporting democratic institutions, supporting human rights, promoting free markets and stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region (122). The United States has an interest in maintaining the geopolitical balance of power in Northeast Asia that presently exists among the regional powers. Historically, the calculus of power in Northeast Asia focuses on Japan, China and Russia with the Korean peninsula at its nexus. The Korean peninsula has been the most sensitive focus of Northeast Asian conflict since World War II because it is the place where the interests of Japan, China, Russia and the United States have intersected (123). The United States has bilateral mutual defense treaties with Japan and South Korea while China and the former Soviet Union have similar bilateral arrangements with North Korea (124). Thus, Korea has been and continues to be a determinant of United States strategy in Northeast Asia. The inter-relationships that exist between the Northeast Asian powers--Japan, China and Russia--and the two Koreas, the unification policies of the Koreas, the internal stability of the peninsula and the power balance on the peninsula have influenced United States policies in Northeast Asia since World War II (125).

China is a nuclear power and the largest power in Northeast Asia in terms of both population and geographic area. As China struggles toward



modernization, it represents a potentially huge market for trade and of course, a military threat to its neighbors. China's army is the largest in Northeast Asia, its submarine fleet is the third-largest in the world, its defense budget is growing rapidly and it is a significant exporter of arms to third-world countries (126). China's strategic interest is in maintaining the status quo on the Korean peninsula. It faces the dilemma of supporting the North Koreans while attempting not to jeopardize its relationship with the United States and its burgeoning trade with the Japanese and South Koreans. In this regard, the presence of United States forces in Korea is not detrimental to the interests of China; United States forces act to preserve stability and restrain North Korea (127). China, however, derives potential security problems from a unified Korea. Foremost among these is having a thriving capitalist Korea with a formidable army close to China's most important industrial region (128). The Chinese are intensely fearful of democratic trends within their own borders and they may perceive a democratic Korea as an economic, military and political threat (129).

Russia's interest in Korea and Northeast Asia is conflict prevention. The Russians perceive that any instability on the peninsula could cause the remilitarization of Japan, worsen Chinese-Russian relations and promote anti-Russian collaboration among the United States, China and Japan (130). Additional Russian strategic goals may be to undermine the rationale for United States military power in Asia with the ultimate political and economic goal of reversing United States alliances with Japan and South Korea (131). To achieve this, Russian authorities are considering resolving its Northern Territories dispute with the Japanese in order to gain financial and technological assistance from the Japanese while developing favorable political contacts with them (132). Russia

may well perceive that the United States' primary purpose of keeping United States forces in Korea and Japan is to prevent either China or Russia from pursuing a more active role in Northeast Asia (133). Current military programs in Russia suggest that Moscow has made a strategic decision to expand its defenses in the Far East by creating a naval, air and air defense umbrella over Korea and Japan (134) and by moving military equipment from Europe into Asia (135).

Japan is the United States' largest trading partner. Together, Japan and the United States account for over one-third of the world's industrial production. Despite its industrial might, Japan has insufficient armed forces to protect itself and is, in effect, a military protectorate of the United States (136). Japanese leaders believe that regional tensions may be caused by China, Russia and a unified Korea imbued with a strong sense of nationalism and an historically based apprehensiveness of Japanese imperialism. After all, Japan is expansionist and is feared by Korea and China as much as Germany is feared by the smaller countries of Europe. Japan invaded China in World War II and annexed Korea in 1910. Japan was at war with the Soviet Union in World War II. Although small, Japan's armed forces are already the third largest in the region (137) and Japan is Northeast Asia's third-largest military spender (138). Without a United States military presence in Northeast Asia, Japan may find itself facing a unified and potentially hostile Korean armed force as well as powerful Russian and Chinese armies. Japan's response may well be to rearm.

The United States military strategy designed to support its national strategy in Northeast Asia is based on the forward deployment of United States air, sea and ground forces in Korea and Japan (139). Presently, United States military forces in Korea serve a dual strategic role; they act to deter North

Korean aggression and serve as a psychological shield for Japan against fear of exposure to Chinese and Russian power (140). Specific objectives of United States military strategy in Korea are to prevent war on the peninsula, ensure the military security of South Korea, and promote South Korean viability and stability (141). United States forces forward deployed in Northeast Asia provide similar added values to United States strategies as they do in Europe. These values include stability, developing trust and confidence with regional allies and acting as an honest broker in disputes (142).

## 2. POST-UNIFICATION STRATEGIES

Tensions, uncertainty and potential for conflict will still exist in Northeast Asia after Korean unification. There will still be unsettled and potentially volatile territorial disputes in the region (143). A unified Korea eliminates the most troublesome potential source for conflict but other examples remain. Disputes may still exist between Russia and Japan in the Northern Territories off Japan and of course, between the Chinese and the Taiwanese over Taiwan itself (144). Political instability and uncertainty may prevail in the governments of China and Russia (145). China is preoccupied with fulfilling a difficult domestic agenda, the Soviet Union no longer exists and the policies of its successor government, be it Russian or the Commonwealth of Independent States, are cloudy at best. China and Korea will worry about Japan. If the United States disengages from Northeast Asia and particularly from Japan and Korea, China and Korea may expect Japan to assume a greater political role in the region matched by a stronger military capability (146). Japan can certainly be expected to remain persistent in extending its growing economic power (147).

Within this geopolitical environment the United States' national strategy

in the Northeast Asia post-unification environment will continue to focus on maintaining its sea lines of communications with the region and promoting regional stability. The lack of aggressive North Korean or Soviet armies in and around the Korean peninsula mitigates the necessity of defending either Korea or Japan, although a prudent United States policy will continue to focus on Russian and Chinese military capabilities in the region. Additionally, because of the inherent distrust and fear that Northeast Asian powers have for the Japanese, it would appear that preventing the Japanese from equipping themselves with an offensive military capability is in the interests of the United States in its efforts to obtain regional stability.

The focus of United States strategy can thus be expected to shift from military confrontation to regional stability. The United States has several military options to support this strategy. First, the United States can disengage its forces from the region and rely on crisis response forces to provide stability and influence in the region. Secondly, the United States can maintain its current level of forward deployed forces in the region. Thirdly, the United States can modify its forward presence in the area through the redeployment and/or repositioning of some of its forces.

Certainly, the United States' domestic agenda is likely to favor the first option because of the cost savings associated with redeployment of overseas-based forces and ideally unification of the Korean peninsula entails conditions where the interests of the Northeast Asian powers would lie in preserving unification rather than upsetting it (148). However, the immensity of the Pacific Ocean makes the effectiveness and timeliness of crisis response forces problematical (149) and for their own part, Asians are not busy collecting peace dividends (150). On the contrary, defense expenditures among Asian nations

have increased substantially over the past few years because of competition for scarce resources--oil and fisheries, primarily--and because Asians fear the power vacuum that may be created by a United States withdrawal from Korea and Japan (151).

Symbolically, the disassembling of the Demilitarized Zone is as important to Northeast Asians as the fall of the Berlin Wall was to Europeans, and the countries of Northeast Asia look to the United States to provide regional stability and a counterbalance to real or perceived Japanese economic and potential military might just as the Europeans trust the United States to continue to counterbalance the Germans in the European region. For the United States to forsake Northeast Asia before the establishment of multilateral security arrangements may be too risky. Only if the United States remains militarily engaged in the region as an honest broker is the stability of the region likely to be guaranteed in the post-unification years.

United States combat forces currently deployed in Northeast Asia include an Army division, three Air Force tactical fighter wings and a Navy aircraft carrier battle group with a Marine Expeditionary Force (152). These forces are designed to deter North Korean aggression against South Korea and in the past have had the additional mission of deterring Soviet aggression against Japan. In the post-unification environment with neither a Soviet nor a North Korean threat, this force level becomes prohibitively expensive economically and strategically unnecessary. As the United States shifts its strategy from military confrontation to regional stability after the Koreans unite, some adjustment in regional force levels can be expected based not only on the strategic environment but also on United States domestic imperatives to reduce military spending in general. Based on these considerations, it is unlikely that the United States will be able to

maintain its current force levels in Northeast Asia or that it is even in the United States' interest to do so.

Modifying the United States presence in Northeast Asia may be accomplished through the redeployment and/or repositioning of its forces in the region. Presently, the United States Army division is located in Korea along with two of the Air Force fighter wings. The Navy aircraft carrier battle group is home-ported in Japan as is one Air Force wing. The Marines are located in Okinawa. Clearly, the removal of the North Korean threat and the shift in United States strategy from one of confrontation to one of stability could entail some amount of force reduction in the region while maintaining a credible forward presence. Additionally, it would seem to be in the United States interest to maintain credible forces in both Japan and Korea. United States forces in Japan would ease fears among other Northeast Asian powers over any incipient desire of the Japanese to rearm while United States forces in Korea may calm Japan's own anxieties over a unified Korea. Since the loss of Subic Bay and Clark Air Base in the Philippines, Japan and Korea of course, remain the only two countries in Northeast Asia that currently host United States combat forces.

### 3. RECOMMENDED STRATEGY

To Northeast Asians, the United States military presence in Northeast Asia represents the United States' determination and intention to remain a Pacific power (153). United States forces in Korea and Japan provide the basis for trust and confidence among the powers of Northeast Asia by mitigating fears over Japanese rearmament and Korean unification. They enhance stability by providing hedges against unpredictability and uncertainty and they act as on-the-spot managers along the peace-crisis-war continuum. Finally, United States

forces in Korea and Japan provide the United States with political leverage to balance power in Northeast Asia (154).

Credible United States forces should be retained forward in Korea and Japan to support United States strategy in Northeast Asia after Korean unification. United States forces in the region, however, should be redeployed and/or repositioned in recognition of a post-unification strategy that focuses on regional stability. As a minimum, United States forces should include an Army division, an Air Force wing and a Navy aircraft carrier battle group with a regional contingency mission. A force this size should be large enough to participate with the Korean, Japanese and other regional armies in large-scale exercises and act as a deterrent to aggressive behavior by regional powers. While sufficient to meet regional requirements, a force of this nature also permits the redeployment of two Air Force wings and a Marine Expeditionary Force.

The Army division should remain in Korea. As the least mobile and most permanent military service the Army provides a degree of commitment and visibility unattainable by more easily removed air and naval forces (155). Practically, the Army division should remain in Korea because Korea currently is the only Northeast Asian nation that willingly hosts United States ground forces. United States Marines are stationed in Okinawa but there is persistent pressure by the Okinawans for their removal from the island (156). The Air Force wing and the Navy aircraft carrier battle group already assigned to Japan should both remain. Both are rapidly deployable forces capable of supporting regional contingencies from their current location in Japan.

This redeployment and repositioning of United States forces provides for a military strategy of forward presence to support a national strategy of maintaining stability in Northeast Asia after Korean unification. Without a Soviet

or North Korean military threat and without a NATO-like multilateral institution to express Northeast Asian security requirements, the United States must define its regional strategy prior to Korean unification. Not to do so may well spark regional conflicts based on historic distrust and animosities between and among the Northeast Asian powers.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this monograph was to determine the prospects for peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula and the implications of such unification on United States' military strategy in Northeast Asia. Two conclusions are presented. First, the peaceful unification of Korea is likely to occur within the next five to ten years and secondly, the United States should retain a forward military presence in both Korea and Japan after Korean unification. Analysis of the Unification Model indicates that deteriorating economic conditions in North Korea are likely to force the North Korean government to become more conciliatory toward social, political and economic overtures made by South Korea through its "Nordpolitik" approach to unification. While the analysis suggests that Korea will likely unify as a capitalist and democratic nation it also indicates that the death of Kim Il Sung may have significant impact on the pace of unification. The conclusion that the United States should keep armed forces forward deployed in Northeast Asia is attained through analysis of the historic and present day geopolitical relationships that exist among the powers in Northeast Asia. Factors that influence this conclusion include the critical economic interest that the United States has in a stable Northeast Asia and the fear and distrust with which Chinese, Russians and Koreans view the Japanese.



Korean unification and its implications for United States national and military strategy in Northeast Asia serves to underscore a broader dilemma for the United States in the next five to ten years. Without the Soviet Union--or the North Koreans--to provide a military focus for its national strategies world-wide and with increasing United States domestic demand to cut military spending, the United States may well be forced to forego its leadership roles in both Europe and Asia. Already, united Germany and Japan have usurped the United States as economic powers in Europe and Asia. The absence of United States military power in Europe and/or Asia may provide sufficient cause for either country to fill a perceived power vacuum caused by United States military disengagement from either region. Operation Desert Storm indicates that United States military power is still ascendant even as its economic power decreases when compared to the Germans and Japanese. However, the United States should not expect to remain as the world's preeminent military power if its world-wide economic position continues to decline. Precipitate military withdrawal from Europe and Asia may accelerate the United States' decline as a military power while doing little to improve its economic position.

This monograph has recommended a United States strategy that endeavors to keep the United States in a leadership role in Northeast Asia after Korean unification. It is a strategy based on the forward presence of United States armed forces in Northeast Asia. It recognizes the critical economic importance of Northeast Asia and the potential volatility of the region after Korean unification. Most importantly, this strategy provides the United States with time; the forward presence of United States armed forces in Northeast Asia gives the United States a leadership role in Northeast Asian affairs it cannot otherwise enjoy until it has redefined and rebuilt its world-wide economic position.

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