The Reduction of US Forces in Korea in the Inter-Korean Peace Process

Tae-Hwan Kwak

Revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the declaration of the end of the Cold War system, a summit meeting between Gorbachev and Roh Tae Woo, major powers’ shift in priority from security to the economic issue, US economic difficulties and deficit problem, and a growing tension reduction in Northeast Asia in the beginning of the 1990s are major factors leading to reassessment of the role of US forces in Korea in the peacemaking process on the Korean peninsula.

Both the US and ROK governments have agreed to the reduction of and a new role for US the Forces in Korea at the first of a three-phase plan for US troop withdrawal from Korea, and it appears that North Korea is now willing to discuss arms control and disarmament issues with the ROK government, recognizing the South as a negotiating partner.

The reduction of US forces stationed in Korea in the inter-Korean peace process is discussed in four parts: (1) a reevaluation of major obstacles; (2) reassessment of the role of the US forces; (3) a suggested timetable (not identical to the official US plan) for American troop withdrawal and ways to use gradual reduction of US forces in Korea as a bargaining chip in negotiations with North Korea, the USSR, and China, and (4) a proposal to the ROK government for eight policy statements in a Common Security and Economic Cooperation Initiative as a link of strategic planning of gradual reduction and the withdrawal of US forces.

The author says that Kim Il-sung should now show sincerely and seriously his deeds, not words, to the world; if Kim shows his sincere attitude and good faith in his behavior, there will be a peaceful unification of Korea in this decade.
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Revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the declaration of the end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, four major powers’ shifts in priority from international security to economic problems, a June 1990 Gorbachev-Roh summit meeting in San Francisco, and a growing reduction of tensions in the Northeast Asian region at the beginning of the 1990s are major factors leading to the reassessment of the role of US forces in Korea in the Korean peacemaking process.

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) seems to respond slowly to the rapidly changing international security environments, while the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea) is quickly adapting itself to changing relationships between itself and the United States, thereby showing a more flexible approach to the policy of status quo regarding the US troop withdrawal issue.

The purposes of this paper are: (1) to reassess major obstacles in the inter-Korean peacemaking process; (2) to reevaluate the roles of US forces in South Korea in a newly changing international environment in the 1990s; (3) to provide a timetable for US troop withdrawal and search for possible ways of using gradual, partial reduction and withdrawal of American forces in Korea as a bargaining chip in negotiations with North Korea, the Soviet Union, and China, firmly to establish a durable peace system on the Korean peninsula; and (4) to propose eight policy statements for the Common
Security and Economic Cooperation Initiative (CSECI) as a link of strategic planning of gradual reduction and withdrawal of US forces in Korea in the 1990s.

**Major Obstacles to the Inter-Korean Peace Process**

South Korea’s “Northern policy” toward the Soviet Union, China, and East European socialist states has led to significantly improved new relationships with these states. Furthermore, a new detente between the Soviet Union and the United States, a newly developing detente between the Soviet Union and China under Gorbachev’s *perestroika* and *glasnost* and China’s economic reforms, and other changes in the Northeast Asian system will eventually be conducive to the firm institutionalization of peaceful coexistence between the two Koreas.

Let us take a brief look at changes in the two Koreas’ policies and changing political environments surrounding the Korean peninsula. ROK President Roh Tae Woo announced a special declaration on July 7, 1988, known as the July 7th Declaration, in which he put forward the six-point policy on reunification: (1) exchange of visits by a broad spectrum of the people of North and South Korea and free visits to both parts of the Korean peninsula by overseas Koreans; (2) exchanges of correspondence and visits between members of divided families; (3) open trade between North and South Korea as a single community; (4) no opposition to nations friendly to the South trading with the North unless it involves military goods; (5) giving up the competitive and confrontational diplomatic war between the North and South while ensuring that the North can make a positive contribution to the international community; and (6) cooperation with Pyongyang in its efforts to improve ties with the United States and Japan and, in parallel, seeking improved ties with the Soviet Union and China.¹

President Roh has been repeatedly proposing a summit meeting between himself and DPRK President Kim Il Sung without any conditions. In an address by President Roh at the 43rd Session of

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the UN General Assembly on October 18, 1988, he proposed that North and South Korea "agree to a declaration of non-aggression or non-use of force in order to better construct a framework for mutual trust and security." He also stated that "the Republic of Korea will never use force first against the North." He proposed an agenda for discussion at a summit meeting by suggesting that "we discuss sincerely and resolve all the problems raised by either or both sides with regard to disarmament, arms control and other military matters."^2

In response to his proposal, Kim also made a proposal for a summit meeting in Pyongyang to discuss several issues: US troop withdrawal, North Korea's confederation plan, and a joint declaration of non-aggression between the North and South. North Korea launched a peaceful offensive by proposing multi-channelled inter-Korean talks, exploiting the political situation in South Korea. Among many proposals, the most significant was North Korea's November 7, 1988, proposal of a "comprehensive peace plan" for the reunification of the Korean peninsula, in which North Korea presented four steps to guarantee peace: (1) phased withdrawal of US armed forces from South Korea, (2) phased reduction of North and South Korean armed forces, (3) information and inspection of (1) and (2), and (4) tripartite talks involving North Korea, South Korea and the United States. North Korea also made a proposal for easing the present political and military confrontation between North and South Korea.^3

Both sides wish to have a summit meeting. Why then can a summit meeting not be held? The North set its preconditions for a summit meeting. The North wants to hold high-level political-military talks prior to a summit meeting. The South has agreed to hold prime ministers' talks dealing with political-military issues. There were North-South Korean dialogues in the post-Seoul Olympics period, including preliminary talks for arranging inter-Korean prime ministers' talks and parliamentary talks. However, there has been little progress in these talks primarily due to North

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Korea's insistence on the suspension of the joint ROK-US military exercises code-named Team Spirit.

Team Spirit is the defensive joint annual military exercise for the security of South Korea. The North argued that inter-Korean talks could not continue if Team Spirit were under way. If Team Spirit were suspended, would ongoing multi-channels of inter-Korean talks continue? The North says "yes." Why then could South Korea not suspend Team Spirit? Which is more important for promoting the national interests of the ROK, continuity of inter-Korean dialogue without Team Spirit or continuity of Team Spirit making no progress on inter-Korean talks? According to South Korean authorities, Team Spirit is essential to South Korean military defensive training, and therefore cannot be suspended. Nevertheless, the South had not much choice but to undertake joint military exercises with the United States as long as the American government wants Team Spirit.

The 1989 joint military exercises were held for only ten days—a short period of time compared to the usual two months—probably to improve inter-Korean relations. Team Spirit '90 has been scaled down and shortened in duration. In February, 1990, the North unilaterally suspended ongoing inter-Korean talks again, because of Team Spirit '90.

The ROK government has agreed to discuss political-military issues with the North. It remains to be seen whether the South can accept the North's "comprehensive peace plan" and a new May 31, 1990, disarmament proposal, including phased withdrawal of US forces and arms reduction of North and South armed forces. It is clear, however, in view of changing international security environment surrounding the Korean peninsula, that the ROK would favorably respond to the North's arms reduction and disarmament proposals.

Koreans have learned many lessons from the 19 years of inter-Korean talks and negotiations since 1971. Let us take a brief look at five major sources identified as obstacles to the peace process on the Korean peninsula. Based on my study of inter-Korean dialogues and negotiations from 1971 to 1990, these are the five source

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categories which could be identified as obstacles to the peace and unification process.

First, North and South Korea have deeply-rooted mutual suspicion and distrust of each other. Each side maintains a “devil mirror-image” of the other. No matter how sincere one side has been in its proposals, the other would never take them seriously, rather simply dismiss them as propaganda ploys. Mutual suspicion and distrust originate from exclusively incompatible political-social-economic systems. Kim Il Sung’s juche ideology in the North is unacceptable to the South Korean authorities. The South Korean government still officially considers North Korea as a hostile enemy state. Under these conditions, nothing could be achieved with mutually perceived hostilities. Unless both sides make the utmost attempt to improve mutual hostile images and distrust, a sincere inter-Korean peacemaking process cannot be expected. The South can hardly accept North Korea’s argument that reunification could solve this problem through the North’s confederation formula. How can South Korea accept North Korea’s unification formula under conditions of mutual suspicion and distrust? Unless each side changes its attitudes toward the other, there will be no peacemaking process on the Korean peninsula.

Second, North and South have conflicting approaches to peace and Korean unification. Both sides view the reunification issue from different perspectives that are diametrically opposed to each other. North Korea takes a “political-military” approach to Korean reunification that is viewed as a liberation of the South Korean people from American “imperialism” and “feudal oppression and exploitation.” Thus, the North has demanded complete removal of US forces from South Korea, thereby adopting a declaration of non-aggression between North and South and concluding a peace treaty between the United States and North Korea replacing the Korean Armistice Treaty of 1953.

On the other hand, Seoul takes a gradual, functional, and step-by-step approach to Korean reunification. It has, therefore, insisted on the presence of American troops, the maintenance of the Korean Armistice Agreement and the United Nations Command (UNC) as a stable, credible deterrence against North Korean aggression until an alternative arrangement is made to keep a durable peace on the
peninsula. Thus, the two approaches are mutually incompatible and unacceptable.

Third, Seoul and Pyongyang have each asserted their own requirements for continued inter-Korean political dialogue. Pyongyang has insisted that the Seoul government accept its unification formula, and has displayed an inflexible and rigid attitude toward inter-Korean negotiations. North and South Korea have presented a number of significant proposals for tension reduction and confidence-building measures. There has been little progress in inter-Korean political dialogue, not because of a lack of specific proposals regarding tension reduction and Korean reunification, but because of a lack of mutual trust, mutual understanding, and will to compromise. Without mutual concessions and compromise between top decision-makers of both sides, one can expect neither a peace process nor peaceful unification of Korea.

Fourth, despite international changes and external pressure on North Korea, Pyongyang is unwilling to open its closed totalitarian society to the outside world. Kim Il Sung is currently tightening his social control in North Korea for fear of his regime's demise resulting from possible drastic changes and economic reform in North Korea, just as changes in Romania and other East European socialist states occurred as a result of political-economic reforms. In my view, Pyongyang may continue to pursue a policy of non-acceptance of peaceful coexistence with the South until its internal political stability coupled with economic prosperity is achieved, or until after the death of Kim Il Sung. It is unlikely that the North will accept a principle of peaceful coexistence with the South in the near future if peaceful coexistence with the South perpetuates the "two Koreas." Domestic political and economic stability in both North and South is a prerequisite to continued inter-Korean dialogue and negotiations.

Fifth, the central theme in inter-Korean relations that Pyongyang has reiterated time and again is the issue of US troops stationed in the South. Pyongyang's demand for US troop withdrawal from South Korea has not changed. In North Korea's view, the presence of US troops is the basic obstacle to inter-Korean dialogue and reunification. However, Seoul has just as strongly insisted that American troops stay because their presence helps achieve a military
balance between the two Korean states and provides a credible and stable deterrence against North Korea. It is unlikely that the North would attempt to use military force against the South to unify the Korean peninsula as long as American forces remain. Thus, US troop withdrawal is strongly opposed by Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington under the present Northeast Asian security conditions. The US troop withdrawal issue will be discussed in detail in this paper.

North Korea has insisted on holding political and military talks first, to reduce tensions, then the existing channels of inter-Korean Red Cross, economic and parliamentary talks would be resumed. On the other hand, South Korea has equally insisted on the resumption of the existing channels of inter-Korean dialogue in order to build up mutual trust and cooperation, and then high-level political and military talks would begin to discuss all issues relating to peace and unification on the Korean peninsula. The two positions are mutually exclusive and incompatible. In response to changing international environments, South Korea has now changed its earlier position on this issue and is prepared for high-level political and military talks with the North. On the other hand, the North has proposed a new plan for arms reduction of both sides’ forces with emphasis on military confidence-building measures between the North and the South.

These five sources will remain as obstacles to inter-Korean peace process unless they can be reduced and even eliminated in the future.

The Role of US Forces in Korea

The security policy of the ROK for the last 40 years has been based upon a firm American commitment to South Korea’s defense, keeping US troops in Korea against another Northern attack. American firm commitment to South Korea provides stable, credible deterrence against North Korea.

The US security interest in Korea has evolved from an American “Japanocentric” strategy maintaining an effective and stable balance of power and deterrent force to contain Soviet expansion in
Northeast Asia. As a link in this strategy, American policy makers have perceived the Korean peninsula as a buffer zone for the defense of US interests in Japan and the Western Pacific region primarily because of Korea's geostrategic position vis-a-vis Japan and US bases in the Pacific.

**Military capabilities of US forces in Korea**

The 1954 Mutual Defense Treaty between the US and the ROK has been a cornerstone of US-South Korean security relations, whereby the United States is firmly committed to the defense of South Korea by continuing to maintain the presence of its 43,000 troops, along with some few hundred nuclear weapons.\(^5\)

Let us take a brief look at the military capabilities of the US forces in Korea. Currently about 43,000 American troops are stationed in South Korea, of which 29,100 are in the Army, 11,200 are in the Air Force and 2,300 belong to KATUSA (Korean Augmentation To the US Army). The American troops have stayed in Korea since the end of the Korean War in 1953 for the purpose of deterring another war. The troop level has been maintained at roughly 40,000 ever since the Nixon Administration pulled out one army division in 1971. South Korea is the only place in the world where US forces are kept at DEFCON 4 (Defense Readiness Condition Four), one level above normal.\(^6\)

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5. The number of US nuclear weapons stored in South Korea is uncertain. In the mid-1970s, the presence of over 600 nuclear weapons in Korea was reported. Arkins and Fieldhouse estimate the current number of nuclear weapons is 151: sixty aircraft bombs, forty 8-inch artillery shells, thirty 155mm artillery shells, and twenty one atomic demolition munition (ADMs, or land mines). It is reported that Kunsan Air Base is the storage location for US nuclear weapons. The US has already withdrawn warheads for Honest John surface-to-surface missiles, Nike-Hercules surface-to-air missiles, and other systems. For further details, see William Arkins and Richard Fieldhouse, *Nuclear Battlefield* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1985), pp. 120-121 and p. 231; House Appropriations Committee, *Military Construction Appropriations for 1987*, Pt. 5., (Washington, DC: 1986), p. 216. On the other hand, according to the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK there are more than 1,000 nuclear weapons of all kinds, means of delivery, and even neutron bombs in South Korea. See *The Pyongyang Times*, March 10, 1990. For deployment of US troops and nuclear arms in South Korea, a US nuclear forward base in the eyes of North Korea, see *The Pyongyang Times*, 11 November 1989.

6. Arkin and Fieldhouse, p. 120.
The US Army stationed in Korea is the Second Infantry Division of the 8th US Army. Other armed forces in Korea include a surface-to-surface missile command, an air defense brigade, a signal brigade, and surveillance, logistics, and intelligence units. The Second Infantry Division and thirteen ROK Army divisions comprise the Combined ROK-US Field Army. It is deployed mostly between the DMZ and Seoul, and its mission is to defend Seoul.

The American ground forces in Korea are equipped with the most advanced, top-of-the-line weaponry. Major ground equipment of the US forces include 155 medium tanks (M-60s and M-55s), 105mm and 155mm artillery, 107mm and 88mm mortars, Vulcan air defense systems, I-Hawk and Redeye surface-to-air missiles and TOW and Dragon anti-tank weapons. Chunchon houses the Fourth US Army Missile Command with Lance surface-to-surface missiles, while Osan is home to the Thirty-eighth Air Defense Artillery Brigade.7

The US Air Force stationed in Korea is part of the 7th US Air Force, and is capable of carrying out independent operations. There are 57 F-4Es, OV-10s and OA-37Bs located at Osan air base. Normally, U-2R reconnaissance craft also take off from Osan. Kunsan houses two squadrons of F-16s. Taegu air base has 14 F-4Es and 18 RF-4C reconnaissance planes, which according to Newsreview (3 February 1990) will be withdrawn soon, and Suwon air base stations 24 A-10s. As of February 1990, the total assets of the US Air Force in Korea include 60 F-16s, 24 F-4s, 24 A-10 ground attack craft, and 16 OV-10 counter insurgency/reconnaissance aircraft.8 In addition, the US Air Force in South Korea possesses AH-1S Cobra TOW attack helicopters and UH-60 Blackhawk transport helicopters. The air bases in Osan and Kunsan are equipped with Stinger anti-aircraft missile systems.9

It is reported that a few hundred US tactical nuclear weapons are stationed in Korea, but the American authorities have neither denied nor confirmed the presence of these weapons. Kunsan air base is allegedly the storage location of the US nuclear weapons. It is likely

that some of the new B-61 tactical nuclear weapons for aircraft are already on Korean soil. The B-61 has four options of yield from 100 Kilotons to 500 kilotons (The nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima was 12 Kilotons.) An 8-inch artillery shell can carry warheads anywhere from less than one Kiloton up to 12 Kilotons. The 155-mm artillery can carry 0.1 Kiloton warheads. There are reportedly two kinds of atomic demolition munitions (ADMs or land mines) in Korea: small ones ranging from 0.01 to one Kiloton and large ones ranging from one to 15 Kilotons. The presence of nuclear weapons in South Korea serves as deterrence against North Korea.

In my view, the use of nuclear weapons against attack from the North is unnecessary and at the same time poses a great danger to the Korean nation. War-fighting capabilities on the Korean peninsula could be adequately maintained with ROK armed forces supported by the US Air Force stationed in Korea. If nuclear deterrence failed, and tactical unclear weapons were to be used on Korean soil, the fallout effect of nuclear weapons would be devastating both to the Korean people and its neighbors, including the USSR, China and Japan.

Military Rationale for Keeping US Forces in Korea

The original objectives of keeping US forces in Korea were to deter a North Korean attack and to prevent Chinese and/or Soviet military intervention in the event of recurrence of war. By defending the security of South Korea and preventing a renewed war in Korea, the continued presence of American forces has provided peace and stability in Northeast Asia, thereby protecting US interests in Japan and the Western Pacific.

The military justification for the continued presence of US ground forces in Korea has been gradually questioned in view of the changing policies of China and the Soviet Union toward the United States, Japan and Korea. Some strategists argue that China and the Soviet Union are unlikely to promote a war on the Korean peninsula.

10. Ibid., p. 80.
Moreover, it is argued that South Korean forces can themselves defend against a North Korean attack because Seoul and Pyongyang now maintain a strategic equivalence—although the role of the US Air Force is to redress the imbalance in air power between the two Koreas, and the ROK still heavily relies on American intelligence units stationed in Korea for its sources of information and intelligence. Thus, military justification for the presence of US combat forces in Korea appears weak, although North Korea's ground forces are numerically superior. However, the official rationale for the presence of US ground forces in Korea is primarily political and psychological in nature. The presence symbolizes American firm determination to keep its defense commitment to South Korea in the event of a renewed war in Korea.

In the 1990s, under a rapidly changing international environment, a gradual, partial US troop withdrawal should be carefully considered in the context of the following four important factors:

First, one may argue that North and South North Korea already agreed to three basic principles of Korean reunification in the 4 July 1972 Joint Communique: (1) an independent solution of the Korean problem without being subjected to outside interference, (2) a peaceful approach to the problem, and (3) the pledge to seek a great national unity, transcending differences in ideology, ideas, and social systems. The US should not interfere in Korean affairs since American forces in Korea could be considered a form of external interference. Thus, the United States should leave the two Koreas to determine the future of their own affairs by themselves. This argument basically supports "Koreanization" of the Korean dilemma. The Korean unification problem should be solved by Koreans themselves without outside interference.

Second, a gradual, partial reduction and withdrawal of US forces stationed in South Korea would be unlikely to invite a new war in Korea. Even if war did occur in Korea, Soviet or Chinese military intervention would appear extremely unlikely. If a war occurred, the Soviet Union and China would have to assess the impact of the war on their relations with the United States and Japan. Their intervention in Korea would possibly bring them into a nuclear confrontation with Washington and Tokyo.
Third, a gradual, partial American withdrawal would not threaten the balance of power in East Asia. The Chinese would welcome an American withdrawal from Korea. It is unlikely that US withdrawal could stimulate the re-armament of Japan and provoke Seoul-Tokyo military ties if a gradual, partial reduction and withdrawal of American forces took place within the inter-Korean peace process.

Fourth, since North and South Korea appear to maintain their strategic balance on the Korean peninsula, it is unlikely that North Korea would strike first to its advantage. Furthermore, changing international security environments and North Korea’s domestic problems and economic stagnation would make it more difficult for North Korea to decide to strike first against South Korea even if it intends to do so, because the North does not have the military capability to win a war.

The author argued elsewhere that the Seoul government should seriously consider the long-term strategic planning on the US troop withdrawal issue and have serious discussions about it with the US government. In short, the ROK should seek “Koreanization of security” by improving and normalizing relations with North Korea in the 1990s. This strategic planning obviously requires a new adjustment to the current Korea-US security relationship. The crucial question is: what steps should be taken to deal with US troops in Korea if the two Koreas are to improve and normalize their relations? A clear argument is: the ROK should be prepared for American ground troop withdrawal in the near future in order to improve relations with North Korea, and US ground troop withdrawal should be used as a bargaining chip in arms control and peace negotiations with North Korea.

The rationale for this argument is based on the following factors. First, considering South Korea’s growing economic and industrial power, the military imbalance between the two Koreas is less significant. Despite the imbalance, one may argue that an essential

THE REDUCTION OF US FORCES IN KOREA

strategic equivalence between North and South appears to have been achieved at the present time.13

Second, a well-planned and gradual reduction and withdrawal of American troops will be better in the long run, thereby preventing a power vacuum on the Korean peninsula if the United States and the ROK were to agree to US ground troop reduction. More importantly, North Korea has already proposed a phased withdrawal of US troops from Korea and arms reduction for a durable peace on the Korean peninsula.

Third, changing policies of the four powers concerned surrounding the Korean peninsula will put pressure on “North Korea’s perestroika and glasnost” in the 1990s, and Seoul’s Northern policy will continue to improve political-diplomatic relations between South Korea and China, the Soviet Union, and East European states.

Fourth, North Korea’s policy has been slowly changing toward South Korea in recent months, and it has indicated its interests in a North-South summit meeting; South Korea is also pursuing its pragmatic policy in line with its July 7, 1988 policy statement and principles of a new unification formula of the Korean National Community.

Fifth, in view of changing international security environments, South Korea’s growing international status as a sovereign state in the 1990s and growing anti-American sentiment in South Korea, continuing trade surplus of South Korea vis-a-vis the United States, and American budget deficit problem, Washington announced it would reduce the level of American troops in Korea. Thus, South Korea should take advantage of the US troop withdrawal issue as a bargaining chip in a creative and productive way before the United States unilaterally carries out reduction and/or complete withdrawal of its ground troops.

US Strategic Planning for Three-Phase Withdrawal

The US and South Korea need to work out a gradual, partial reduction of American troops and readjustment of the US-Korea security relationship for the 1990s. The Bush administration has already prepared for a gradual withdrawal of US troops from Korea.

Secretary Richard Cheney visited Seoul in February 1990 for a conference with South Korean Defense Minister Lee Sang Hoon. They have agreed in principle on a number of significant items.14 First, South Korea accepted in principle the gradual withdrawal of about 5,000–6,000 American noncombatant troops. In January 1990, the United States announced that it would close three of its five air bases in South Korea and withdraw about 2,000 Air Force support personnel by 1992.

Second, both sides agreed that the American role would gradually change from a leading to a supporting one as South Korea assumes more leadership, including the eventual command of key units of the Combined Forces Command. South Korea would consider taking over operational control of its own armed forces during peacetime, with the United States resuming command in times of war.

Third, both sides agreed to work out a greater share for South Korea’s annual contributions to American defense costs. The US suggested that South Korea should double its $300 million in annual direct contributions to the $2.4 billion costs of maintaining its troops in Korea. They agreed to work out the details and hard numbers of the proposed new arrangements later on. The detailed agreements were disclosed in a required report to Congress in April 1990.15

The US Department of Defense announced a timetable for US troop reduction and withdrawal.16 The DoD’s three-phase plan for the restructuring of American forces stationed in Korea during the 1990s is as follows:

16. Ibid., pp. 15–17.
Phase I, 1 to 3 Years: The United Nations Command must be retained, essentially in its present form. During this phase, the United States will reduce administrative overhead and phase out units whose mission can be assumed by the South Korean forces. By 1993, the US will reduce about 7,000 personnel, including 2,000 Air Force personnel and about 5,000 ground force personnel. These reductions are based on steady improvements in South Korean defense capabilities.

Phase II, 3 to 5 Years: During Phase I, the United States will reexamine the North Korean threat, evaluate the effects of changes in Phase I, and establish new objectives for Phase II. The restructuring of the US 2nd Infantry Division will be considered at this point. Additionally, withdrawal of the 2nd Infantry Division will be considered in terms of the state of North-South relations and further improvements in ROK military capabilities.

Phase III, 5 to 10 Years: If the earlier phases were successfully completed, South Koreans should be ready to take the leading role in their own defense with fewer US forces required to maintain deterrence on the peninsula.

The US government spelled out the following specific bilateral security objectives in this report. These are (1) to deter North Korean aggression or defeat it if deterrence fails, (2) to reduce political-military tensions by encouraging inter-Korean talks and the institution of a confidence-building measures regime, and (3) to change the role of American forces in Korea from a leading to a supporting role, including some force reductions. These security objectives clearly indicate a firm American commitment to the security of the Republic of Korea in the 1990s. An additional US troop withdrawal during Phase II and Phase III will depend on the peace process on the Korean peninsula and improvements in ROK military capabilities. It appears that US forces in Korea will remain even after the year 2000 unless North and South Korea firmly establish a durable peace system on the Korean peninsula.

17. Ibid., p. 15.
Author's Timetable for Reduction/Withdrawal of US Forces in Korea

What, then, should and could be done to establish a peace system on the Korean peninsula? The time has come to consider seriously the US troop withdrawal issue as political leverage in dealing with North Korea, as the author has advocated since 1983. How could the US troop withdrawal issue be used as a bargaining chip? Both US and ROK authorities could use it as a policy instrument for achieving security and peace on the Korean peninsula in the 1990s. With US-Korea cooperation the instrument could be very effective. Herein a new role of American troops in Korea can be defined as a bargaining chip in arms control and peace negotiations with North Korea in the inter-Korean peace and unification process.

To be specific, I would like to make the following timetable for US troop reduction and withdrawal from South Korea during the 1990s. The timetable would be subject to change according to the North's attitudes toward South Korea. The following timetable consists of three stages.

**Stage I (1990–1993):** The US and the ROK governments should take unilateral initiatives to temporarily suspend Team Spirit for three years (1991–93), and to reduce about 5,000–6,000 noncombatants along with closing three US air bases in South Korea and withdrawing 2,000 Air Force support personnel from South Korea by 1992, as planned.

Judging from the North Korean foreign ministry's March 5, 1990 statement demanding that the United States take a practical step for troop withdrawal, North Korea will respond favorably to these initiatives. It stated that "If the United States practically takes at

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18. The author argued for the first time in 1983 that the US troop withdrawal issue should be used as a *political bargaining chip* in negotiations with North Korea, see "How to Deal with the Stalemated Inter-Korean Dialogue: The Non-zero Sum Formula," paper presented at the Fifth Joint Conference of the Korean Political Science Association and the Association of Korean Political Scientists in North America, 8–10 August 1983, Seoul, Korea. This idea has been recently accepted by South Korean scholars, government officials, and political leaders. For a summary of 14 March 1990 hearings before Foreign Affairs and National Unification Committee, ROK National Assembly, see *Korea Times Los Angeles*, 15 March 1990.
least a step for partial pullout which would mark the start of the complete withdrawal of the US forces from South Korea, we will welcome it and we are ready to take more necessary measures corresponding to it for military confidence and disarmament between the North and the South."19

In response to the American–South Korean announcement of a planned reduction of US forces in Korea, on May 31, 1990, prior to the summit meeting between Soviet Union President Gorbachev and ROK President Roh, North Korea made a new "disarmament proposal for peace on the Korean peninsula" in order to ease tensions and create a peaceful climate for national reunification.20 The contents of the proposal are (1) confidence-building between the North and the South, (2) arms reduction in the North and South, (3) withdrawal of foreign forces, and (4) disarmament and guarantee for peace after disarmament.

North Korea has changed its earlier position that insisted upon trilateral talks among the US, the South and the North. Now it has proposed to hold bilateral inter-Korean talks about disarmament and arms reduction for peace on the Korean peninsula. It is expected that the ROK government will respond favorably to this new proposal.

As mentioned, these unilateral initiatives should be taken with US–South Korean military cooperation. Prior to the final decision on temporary suspension of Team Spirit and reduction of American troops, the US and ROK governments should inform North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union of these initiatives, inviting North Korea to take a similar move to reduce tensions on the peninsula. For instance, the North could be encouraged to take reciprocity of substantially reducing its offensive forces deployed along the DMZ. South Korea could seriously discuss military confidence-building measures with North Korea as the latter recently proposed, to induce Pyongyang to take positive actions toward the South in the several channels of inter-Korean dialogue.

During the first stage, the ROK government should be able to take over its military operational rights in times of peace, and should assume more of the cost of keeping US forces in Korea. During this stage, the ROK should declare the Common Security and Economic Cooperation Initiative (CSECI) and a summit meeting between President Roh Tae Woo and President Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong Il should be arranged for discussing all issues of mutual concerns, including an adoption of the basic relations charter and a declaration of mutual non-aggression. Details of the CSECI will be discussed later.

Stage II (1994–1996): The second stage would be substantial cuts of the US troop level in Korea. The 2nd Infantry Division would be withdrawn leaving a brigade with support personnel, along with the total withdrawal of American tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea. This stage cannot be completed without concessions from North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union, such as a North-South Korean basic relations charter based on the institutionalization of peaceful coexistence between North and South, a bilateral arms control agreement between the two Koreas, a peace charter replacing the Korean Armistice Agreement of 1953, and two sets of a four-party conference to discuss arms control issues as described above.

Stage III (1997–2000 and beyond): At this stage, US ground troops should be withdrawn along with a 50% cut of US air and naval forces stationed in Korea. If and when North and South Korea agreed to the establishment of the Korean Commonwealth, the North-South Korean confederation stage (4th stage) in my "block-building model of Korean political integration," there would be no need for keeping the remaining US air and naval forces in Korea.

This timetable for US troop withdrawal in the 1990s could be subject to changes in inter-Korean relations and international and Korean domestic environments. I would like to make it very clear that this timetable should be used as a bargaining chip in arms control and peace negotiations with the North Korean government,

and that a phased withdrawal of US forces from Korea in the 1990s should not endanger a strategic balance on the Korean peninsula.

North Korea also agreed on a phased withdrawal of American forces from Korea. North Korea's demand for the US troop withdrawal from South Korea has been closely linked to the following North Korean leaders' assumptions: first, the complete withdrawal of US forces could contribute to the demise of the Seoul government, which would lead to a "South Korean revolution," thereby creating a sympathetic, friendly government in Seoul; second, North Korean leaders believe that the Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo unification formula could be achieved upon the complete withdrawal of US forces; third, Kim Il Sung's unification dream could be realized when the American forces in Korea are gone.

It goes without saying that North Korea has been effectively using the US troop withdrawal issue for domestic and international propaganda purposes. Domestically, the Kim regime has used it for domestic political stability and legitimacy of his autocratic rule for the past forty years. Internationally, it is also used as a tool of justifying his status as a leader of the anti-imperialist movement in the Third World. If this analysis is accurate, Kim Il Sung would have serious problems justifying his legitimacy as a "great leader" in North Korea if and when US forces are completely withdrawn from Korea.

A Proposal for The Common Security and Economic Cooperation Initiative (CSECI)

What should the South Korean government do to create favorable condition for the inter-Korean peace process in the 1990s? Since a partial, gradual reduction of US forces in Korea will in my view produce positive effects on inter-Korean relations, the ROK government needs a new creative and innovative strategic thinking about the peace process that will be linked to this partial, gradual reduction. Thus, I would like to propose that the government consider the following new policy statements of the Common Security and Economic Cooperation Initiative (CSECI), designed for
both Koreas to work together for common security and economic cooperation to achieve a peaceful unification of Korea in the 1990s and beyond. It contains the following eight policy proposals:

First, President Roh should propose the North to establish a highly technologically developed communication research center in Panmunjom. The center may be named as The Korean Academy for Peace and Unification—a symbol of peaceful unification and conflict management. It would be permanently staffed by representatives and scholars from both sides to study inter-Korean common security and economic cooperation issues and to manage inter-Korean conflicts under a co-director for each side. Effective and productive communication is essential for building mutual trust, for reducing the devil mirror-images and the misunderstanding of each other's position, and for the promotion of mutual common interests.

Second, President Roh should declare that both the ROK and the DPRK should respect and observe the spirit and letters of the Joint Communique of July 4, 1972 to which both Seoul and Pyongyang agreed. Both should refrain from using inter-Korean dialogue for propaganda and internal political purposes. Both sides need to reduce hostile signals toward each other and should increase the intensity and frequency of cooperative interactions, thereby contributing to an inter-Korean detente. For one thing, each side should stop vilifying the other. This joint communique should be included in an inter-Korean basic relations charter.

Third, President Roh should declare that the ROK government is prepared for an agreement with Kim Il Sung in principle about the US troop withdrawal issue. Roh should urge Kim to modify his revolutionary strategy in the South. Pyongyang should clearly understand that the South Korean revolution it has pursued for the past forty years cannot be achieved, and that the Korean dilemma will be solved only by political, peaceful means through North-South bilateral talks and negotiations.

Fourth, Roh should declare that at a North-South summit meeting, there can be discussion about North Korea's proposal for tripartite talks among Pyongyang, Seoul and Washington to discuss a peace treaty replacing the armistice agreement of 1953 with the United States, and to discuss a declaration of non-aggression between Seoul and Pyongyang.
In my view, the ROK should accept the tripartite talks proposal for the long run; continued opposition to tripartite talks may not necessarily be in the long-term interest. Therefore, Seoul should reconsider the North Korean proposal and make a counter-proposal for the tripartite conference by providing agenda items to be discussed at a summit meeting. It is significant that North Korea has accepted the ROK government as an equal in her proposal for tripartite talks. North Korea’s priorities in the tripartite talks are clear in order of importance: (1) a peace agreement with the United States, (2) a non-aggression declaration with the ROK, (3) a reunification dialogue between the ROK and the DPRK, but they could be negotiable at the tripartite conference. The US and the ROK as equals can alter North Korea’s priorities during the tripartite talks to a different order of importance: (1) a non-aggression declaration with the ROK, and (2) a peace agreement with the United States. This can be done at the negotiating table. It is clear that two separate sets of agreements would be concluded at the tripartite conference.

The ROK government now has a better card to be used against North Korea and should take the initiative in making a mutually acceptable proposal to deal creatively with the stalemate. The ROK government should be prepared for items on the agenda at the tripartite conference involving the United States, North and South Korea.

Fifth, if North-South Korean bilateral talks continue to be deadlocked, several international conferences should be considered to discuss the Korean question. Roh should propose that two separate four-party conferences be held to solve the Korean dilemma. One would include the US, China, North and South Korea to discuss, among other issues, an alternative arrangement (i.e., a peace agreement) for replacing an armistice agreement of 1953, perhaps under the good offices and mediation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. China, North Korea, and the UN Command (the American and South Korean forces) were parties to the present armistice agreement.

The other four-party conference would include the United States, the Soviet Union, North and South Korea to discuss arms control issues and other related issues including economic cooperation.
Given the fact that the Soviet Union plays an increasingly significant role in keeping peace in Northeast Asia and that it favors this type of conference,²² the ROK government should pursue a multilateral diplomacy to realize the two sets of four-party international conference.

Sixth, in the North Korean view, Team Spirit is incompatible with the successful progress of inter-Korean dialogue and negotiations. Team Spirit '90 once again provoked North Korea's very hostile reaction. One February 27, 1990, Pyongyang announced its armed forces were ordered to full readiness for combat mobilization "in face of the grave situation under which the danger of a new war, a nuclear war, has been created in our country owing to the reckless military provocations of the US imperialist and the South Korean puppet clique."²³ As long as Team Spirit is under way, it is unlikely that inter-Korean dialogue will continue. Thus, if South Korea wants to continue inter-Korean dialogue without interruption, Roh should propose that the US and the ROK consider a moratorium on US-ROK joint military exercises for the next three years. In view of North Korea's hostile signals sent to the ROK in 1985–1990, the moratorium could give North Korea an incentive to continue inter-Korean dialogue and negotiations in good faith. The ROK government should actively seek US support of this proposal, and it can be expected that with such a moratorium the Soviet–North Korean naval exercises that were staged for the first time in the fall of 1986 will be stopped in the future. The proposed moratorium on Team Spirit should be seriously reconsidered for the future.

Seventh, in the peace-making process on the Korean peninsula, the Seoul government needs to consider seriously the long-term strategic planning about the American troop withdrawal issue and have serious discussions on this issue with the US government as

²². This conclusion was based on my conversations with Northeast Asian specialists at the Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada in July 1988 in Moscow. Later, Dr. Bogaturov, one of Asian specialists at the Institute, wrote an article about the role of the Soviet Union in the Korean peace process for New Times. This article is in part a summary of my conversations with him. Dr. Bogaturov was very supportive of my idea of the four-power conference. For further details, see Alexei Bogaturov and Mikhail Nosov, "The Korean Aspect", New Times, 12 July 1989, pp. 26–27.

²³. For details of North Korea's hostile reactions to Team Spirit '90, see The Pyongyang Times, 3 March 1990.
suggested in this paper. At the same time, the United States needs seriously to consider transferring its operational rights to the ROK, which is long overdue. After the transfer of military operational rights on the Korean peninsula, the Seoul government could consider convening North-South Korean political and military talks as North Korea has proposed. The timetable for US troop reduction and withdrawal as suggested in this paper should be seriously considered by both Seoul and Washington.

Eighth, Roh should propose that South Korea provide some form of economic assistance and technology transfer to North Korea, which is currently experiencing severe stagnation of its economy. According to ROK National Unification Board data, it was estimated as of 1986 that North Korea's total debt to foreign countries was about 4.06 billion dollars (2.23 billion dollars owed to Western countries and Japan, and 1.83 billion dollars to communist countries). Thus, it is proposed that South Korea, an "economic brother," provide an economic package either in low interest credit or grants to North Korea, or both, to help North Korea economically. It seems outrageous to some South Koreans, but it will pay off in the long run. The ROK has provided economic assistance and grants to other former socialist countries in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and it makes more sense for the South to provide economic assistance to the North without making brag of it. The South's economic assistance and cooperation with the North will have profound effects on the inter-Korean peace process.

Conclusion

As discussed in this paper, the author argues that the US troop reduction and withdrawal issue be used as a political bargaining chip in arms control and peace negotiations with North Korea. It is also proposed that the Roh government in Seoul declare new policy statements of the Common Security and Economic Cooperation Initiative (CSECI) to speed up the peace and unification process on the Korean peninsula as a link to the strategic planning of the gradual reduction and withdrawal of US forces in Korea in the 1990s.
The Kim government in Pyongyang would eventually accept a principle of peaceful coexistence with South Korea if the Roh government were to accept the CSECI mutual trust building measures to build up mutual trust and understanding. The North Korean government has accepted a phased withdrawal of US forces in Korea, although the time frame for such a withdrawal could be readjusted. The South Korean government has also accepted a gradual, partial reduction and withdrawal of US forces in Korea with a clear understanding that gradual reduction should not in any way endanger the security of South Korea.

Since both Koreas and the United States have accepted a three-phase withdrawal plan of American forces stationed in Korea, there is a high level of probability of an inter-Korean summit meeting in the near future for further discussions on confidence-building measures of mutual concerns.

Five years ago, on June 1, 1985, in his interview by the editor of the Sikai (The World), a Japanese monthly magazine, Kim Il Sung said that “North Korea has neither the intention nor the capability to invade the South.” North Korea recently reiterated that it “unilaterally reduced the Korean People’s Army by 100,000 men by the end of 1987 in order to make a substantial breakthrough in arms reduction on the Korean peninsula and, earlier, took a positive step of relocating 150,000 troops in peaceful construction.”

Nevertheless, the American and South Korean authorities neither trust the reduction of the North Korean army nor Kim’s words. Herein the credibility gap is a serious problem for North Korea. Thus, Pyongyang should build up its credibility and image as a civilized nation.

Now is the time for Kim to show sincerely and seriously his deeds, not words, to the world. Kim could unilaterally take easy steps of reducing tensions on the Korean peninsula by opening the North Korean closed society to the world and by observing the bilateral agreements contained in the July 4, 1972, Joint Communiqué. If Kim shows his sincere attitude and good faith by his behavior, there will be meaningful and productive inter-Korean peace process, eventually leading to a peaceful unification of Korea in the coming decade.