

**THE SECURITY RELATIONS BETWEEN  
THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA AND THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DURING THE 1970s *n***

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## PREFACE

This work is a modest attempt to analyse the security relations between the Republic of Korea and the United States of America. While the emphasis has been given to the decade of 1970s, a brief historical background of the factors that were responsible for such a relationship has also been highlighted in the introductory chapter. In the second chapter it has been shown how the ROK perceives its security environment and the role of the United States therein. The response of the United States to such a perception of the ROK has been discussed in the third chapter. Also in this chapter attempt has been made to understand the undercurrents of the US policy toward the ROK during the 1970s for, this was the most turbulent period as far as the security relationship between the two countries was concerned. In the fourth chapter, the range and intensity of the interactions in the security sphere between the ROK and the US, as it existed during the 1970s, has been examined. The last chapter carries the concluding remarks.

In preparing this dissertation I have received invaluable help from my supervisor, Mr. R.R. Krishnan, Assistant Professor of Korean Studies, Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi. Indeed, but for his guidance and encouragement, it would not have been possible for me to undertake this work.

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## **C O N T E N T S**

	<b>Pages</b>
<b>PREFACE</b>	<b>1 - 11</b>
<b>CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1 - 35</b>
<b>CHAPTER II SECURITY PERCEPTION OF THE ROK DURING THE 1970s</b>	<b>36 - 76</b>
<b>CHAPTER III THE ROK'S SECURITY ; THE PERCEPTION OF THE USA</b>	<b>77 - 128</b>
<b>CHAPTER IV THE ALLIANCE AT WORK</b>	<b>129 - 154</b>
<b>CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>155 - 169</b>
<b>SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>170 - 175</b>

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In 1882, when the Korean-American Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation was concluded, most Americans knew little about the "Land of the Morning Calm". Similarly, the Koreans, ignorant about the USA till the middle of the 19th century, had developed an unfavourable image of the USA, especially when the American marines attacked and routed the Korean garrison on Kanghwa island in 1871, and thus succeeded in taking a punitive action against Korea's destroying the "General Sherman", an American trading ship, and attacking her crew out of "misunderstanding".<sup>1</sup> As a result the Koreans had rebuffed in 1880 the repeated American attempts to establish treaty relations,<sup>2</sup> so that the industrialising USA's need for market and raw materials could be met. Finally, the Chinese succeeded in persuading the Koreans to sign a treaty with the USA. Because it was the Chinese who imparted the initial favourable image of the USA as a country which had been fair and just toward the Far East.<sup>3</sup>

The then Korean ruler, on the other hand, realised the impossibility of withstanding these Western pressures. He believed that "if one nation stands isolated and alone it

will (be) bereft of all assistance and give rise to enmity on the part of all other countries,.... (and)..... it will become the object of general attack, and then it will be defeated, and at least ruined, and then its repentance will be great indeed".<sup>4</sup>

However, the Treaty, apart from guaranteeing the US certain commercial privileges, reads: "If other Power deals unjustly or oppressively with either government, the other will exert their good offices, on being informed of the case to bring about an amicable arrangement, thus shewing their friendly feelings".<sup>5</sup>

The Koreans rather early in their treaty relations with the USA "came to labor under a misapprehension that the US had made a commitment to defend Korea's independence when it signed the treaty with Korea". The strong sympathy of the Americans who worked in Korea, especially the US Army Advisory Group of Korea (K MAG) - a semi-official military assistance unit of the US which operated from 1888 to 1896, the year when this military school was abolished by the Japanese<sup>6</sup> - bolstered this misunderstanding.

In the meantime, the US policy of "non-involvement in Korea" came to be replaced by a pro-Japanese policy of the Roosevelt Administration. For, the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904 on the question of supremacy over Korea changed the situation drastically. As Japan emerged the victor<sup>7</sup> of the war, President Theodore Roosevelt

sent Secretary of War William Howard Taft to Tokyo and concluded the "Taft Kastura Memorandum" on 29 July 1905. It gave the US support to Japan's colonization of Korea in return for Japan's renunciation of any ambition towards the Philippines.<sup>7</sup> Having no inkling of this "secret agreement",<sup>8</sup> the Korean emperor sent a "secret letter" to the American President in October 1905 requesting him to come to his rescue in accordance with the clauses of the Treaty, as Japan had made Korea a protectorate.<sup>9</sup> The emperor subsequently found out that President Roosevelt was not interested in the matter. Similar was the American attitude when Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910.

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson enunciated his famous "Fourteen Points" which emphasized the concepts such as "self-determination" and "self-rule"; but they were never applied in case of Korea. Rather, when the exiled Korean nationalists, now enthused with Wilson's pronouncement, met at San Francisco and decided to send a delegation to Paris Peace Conference to appeal to Wilson to help Korea become independent, they were not given the passports on the ground that they, being Koreans and hence subjects of Japan, should obtain them (passports) from Japan.<sup>10</sup>

The <sup>la</sup>lackadaisical American attitude toward Korea can be attributed to the fact that Korea, from the beginning, had been seen by the US in terms of "trade"; but the trading

4

rights were sacrificed to Japan with the sole purpose of not getting entangled in any conflict in this part of the world and thus keeping the Philippines (an American protectorate) immune to Japanese designs. Such a scenario persisted till Japan attacked the US in 1941. Throughout all these years, only the American "ideals and ideas", thanks to the Korean Churches and Christian organizations, that contributed positively to the Korean nationalism.

## II

After the outbreak of the World War II, and the American participation in it, the necessity of evolving a somewhat definite framework which would involve the colonies under the Japanese rule, was felt by Franklin D. Roosevelt. At Cairo in 1943, the US, along with its war-time allies, Great Britain and China, discussed about this aspect. With regard to Korea, "the aforesaid three great Powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent".<sup>11</sup>

The use of the phrase "in due course" in the aforesaid joint statement at Cairo implied that the US still gave little attention to future political implications of the problem. Korea was not simply important to the US. "Thus the independence (of Korea) was promised almost as an after-thought; the actual aim was the punishment of Japan".<sup>12</sup>



But Korea did figure prominently in the "general context"<sup>13</sup> of American thinking regarding the post-war disposition of former colonial areas. The essential question was one of power and control : who would get the colonies? The US found the answer in the idea of the Great Power trusteeships : "the colonies would be given to the powers in trust until such time as they were deemed ready to handle their own affairs. Multilateral international bodies would replace unilateral colonialism, and the colonies would be started on the road to independence, however slowly and gradually".<sup>14</sup>

In line with the above belief, according to Cordell Hull, President Roosevelt had suggested to the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, on 27 March 1943 the idea of placing Korea under an international trusteeship.<sup>15</sup> Later in 1945 at Yalta, Roosevelt proposed to Stalin to accept the idea of trusteeship for Korea under four powers: Great Britain, China, the USA and the USSR.<sup>16</sup> Stalin, it is reported, asked Roosevelt why a trusteeship should at all be set up in Korea, if the Koreans could produce a satisfactory government of their own. Roosevelt, therefore, had to explain that in the Philippines, where the US had an opportunity to gain experience of colonial matters, it had taken the Americans about fifty years to prepare the people for self-government, and that in the light of this experience, he envisaged for Korea a period of trusteeship extending from twenty to thirty years to prepare the people for self-

-government. Stalin, thereupon remarked that the shorter the period the better.<sup>17</sup>

The trusteeship had "a peculiar American ring to it. Trusteeships would place a friendly demeanor on the interests of the powers and end the colonial system of unilateral exploitation".<sup>18</sup> A spirit of partnership would prevail. The world's resources would be open to all. But "unlike an earlier era of American involvement in Asia, a new involvement in Asia, a new 'open door' would not simply maintain an entry for a weak America in a world of power politics. Now the US would emerge the most powerful nation in the world and could well expect to dominate the international arrangements of this sort".<sup>19</sup>

The US wanted to achieve its supremacy in trusteeship arrangements; but the method of attaining so was the use of force by a de-facto means in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation. Thus, as early as March 1944, State Department planning envisioned American occupation of Korea and noted the importance for American post-war aims of American participation in whatever military operations took place in Korea. It argued: "The occupation by the US of a major part in civil affairs and in an international supervision of an interim government would be greatly facilitated by the participation of the US in such military operations as take place in and around Korea".<sup>20</sup>

The emphasis in the above argument was on the "occupation first, trusteeship later". And this exactly happened as far as the subsequent activities of the USA in Korea were concerned. The USSR had declared war against Japan on 8 August 1945. The Soviet forces immediately arrived in Korea on 12 August 1945, and the Japanese surrendered.

Soon after the coming of the Soviets, Korea was divided at latitude 38° north into Soviet and American occupation zones, although the American troops landed in Korea on 7 September 1945, nearly one month after the Soviets came.

The division of the peninsula was mainly an American decision, that too of its war department. At an important session <sup>of</sup> State-War-Navy Co-ordinating Committee (SWNCC), held on 10-11 August 1945, the decision was taken. The decision was mainly military in nature,<sup>21</sup> although it was not totally bereft of political purpose (two-third population of Korea lived in the South; South had an easy access to the Pacific - all these might have influenced the American decision). But no political designs had been clearly spelt out. The division of the peninsula was never the subject of discussions among the war-time leaders. "It was proposed to limit the Soviet occupation of the whole peninsula since the USA could not send sufficient forces to receive the Japanese surrender any further north".<sup>22</sup>

### III

As mentioned earlier, the American troops, under General R. Hodge, landed in Korea in September (7th) 1945, to accept the Japanese surrender, ~~the administrative power only~~. General Hodge, before his departure, was given a draft directive which "explicitly stated that he was to remove the Japanese administrators, though retaining for the time the general structure of the government".<sup>23</sup> General Mac-Arthur, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in the Pacific had "all powers of government in Korea vested in him until August 1947"<sup>24</sup>, according to the "General order No. 1" signed by him.<sup>24</sup> Thus General Hodge was to work under the instructions and guidance of Mac Arthur.

However, Mac-Arthur did not give any support or advice to General Hodge.<sup>25</sup> The fact that General Hodge did not get any other order, at least till mid-October, again indicated that the USA had not yet a mature policy toward Korea. On 17 October, ~~the~~ Washington transmit<sup>ed</sup> a detailed and comprehensive statement of policy to military in the southern half.<sup>26</sup> This urged "the progressive elimination of all vestiges of Japanese control over Korean economic and political life". Such agencies as the police "will be progressively purged of undependable and undesirable elements and in particular of Japanese and Koreans who collaborated with the Japanese". This also authorized the occupation to encourage democratic parties and to abolish "those whose activities are inconsistent" with the

requirements and objectives of policy but expressly stated "you (Hodge) will not extend official recognition to, nor utilize for political purposes, any self-styled Korean provisional government". Finally, Hodge was ordered to establish the greatest possible uniformity in administrative practices with the Soviet forces in the north, so that unification later would not prove difficult.

The interval between the landing of the American troops and a definite policy regarding what to do during the "occupation" period left the military officers in Korea to apply their own experiences at home (the USA) - experience emerging out of a heterogenous society being run by the principles of accommodation of diverse interests - to an altogether different "Korean setting"<sup>27</sup> of which they were totally ignorant of. A country marked by its intense centrality and homogeneity, Korea in 1945 was well set for self-rule. A Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence (CPKI) had been formed on 15 August 1945 through the leadership of Lyuh Woon-hyang. Under its auspices, local "Peoples Committees" quickly spread throughout the country. On 6 September, local committees' representatives and national leaders met in Seoul and organized a national group called "the Korean People's Republic". Left to themselves, these committees could have produced stable polity. But it was not to be. When General Hodge arrived, the conservative Christians misguided him about

the People's Republic and the communist influence therein. In fact, the majority of the members were of left inclinations; but they were not guided by the outside forces (mainly the USSR) as the Americans later thought them to be.

However, General Hodge outlawed the "Republic" on 12 December 1945, and established, instead, US military government in Korea (USAMGK).<sup>28</sup> But, this, it should be noted, was done by himself, without any instruction from Washington.<sup>29</sup> The experiment, therefore, was named by some scholars as "Operation, Trial and Error".<sup>30</sup> Confronted with a strange language and unfamiliar culture, and with no initial conception of the intensity of the Korean desires, the Americans were forced to rely upon limited knowledge, ingenuity and common sense.

However, it will be unfair to say that the policy makers in Washington were not bothered about Korea at all. They indeed were: Edwin M. Martin, the then Chief of the Division of Japanese and Korean Economic Affairs in the State Department, said:

.... Korea won't have much of the direct effect on our economy ... although we did have a very extensive commerce with her before the Japanese moved in 40 years or so ago. But if we can settle the Korean question quickly and fairly through the cooperation of great Powers, it will remove a potential trouble spot and contribute greatly to the peace of Asia. And that might mean a lot ... because a peaceful Asia is essential to the increased world trade that will mean more jobs for the Americans. 31

Thus one can say the USA had a policy but not a "workable"<sup>32</sup> one toward Korea so far. This can be explained by the fact that the US, although determined to play an important role in post-war Asia, was of the opinion that while solving <sup>the Korean</sup> any Asian problem, the USSR, among others, should be taken into confidence. The cold war, in fact, had not started then,<sup>33</sup> although mutual suspicions prevailed between the USA and the USSR.

It is against this background that at the Moscow Conference held on 27 December 1945, the USA, the USSR and the UK made a declaration on Korea.<sup>34</sup> It was agreed that there would be set up a provisional government; and to assist the formation, there shall be established a Joint Commission consisting of the representatives of the US command in Southern Korea and the Soviet command in Northern Korea. After consulting the Korean "democratic parties and organisations", the Commission will make recommendations (regarding the provisional government) which would be presented for the consideration of the governments of the USSR, China, the UK and the USA prior to a final decision by the two governments represented in the joint commission. Finally, the joint commission, with the participation of the now established provisional Korean government would put forth proposals for the joint considerations of the USA, the USSR, the UK and China, for the working out of an agreement concerning a four-power trusteeship of Korea for a period of up to five years.

Besides this, there would be an early conference of the US and the USSR for the elaboration of measures establishing permanent coordination in administrative economic matters in the two halves.

#### IV

The American attitude toward the USSR stiffened when the "cold war" confrontations, particularly in Europe, became intense day by day in 1946. This, now, made the US suspicious of the USSR in Korea too (and the vice-versa). In the Joint Commission meetings, which were held in accordance with the agreement reached at Moscow, this mutual suspicion was reflected most importantly in the following issues.<sup>35</sup>

First was the provision in Moscow Agreement of consulting the Korean democratic parties and organizations before the Commission making any recommendations to the four Powers for setting up a provisional government. Deadlock resulted from differences between the USA and the USSR on which Korean political groups would be consulted. Because, the military government by this time had allowed hundreds of groups, irrespective of membership to be registered as political organizations, some of which were far left, the rest being the moderates and extreme rightists. That too, some of the groups were



supporting the trusteeship proposal and some were opposing. Whereas, the US backed the moderates, Moscow maintained a rigid stand that those who opposed the trusteeship idea should be excluded from the consultations. In American opinion, there was no point in debating like this as the final settlement regarding the "trusteeship" rested with the powers who had agreed to the Moscow decision. The then Secretary of State Byrnes, therefore, said that the Korean opposition to the trusteeship plan could not be used as an excuse for exclusion from consultation.<sup>36</sup> However, the USA tried to bring about a compromise on this point. The USSR agreed to the idea at the beginning,<sup>37</sup> but it remained stubborn about it in the subsequent negotiations.

The second issue on which the deadlock arose, and this was a later development, was about withdrawal of the foreign troops from Korea. It is important to note here that Stalin, from the beginning, was not that enthusiastic about the prolonged staying of foreign troops on the Korean soil. For, in North Korea, in any case the Soviet troops had encouraged the local arrangement (committees) that were established soon after 15 August 1945. They, thus, were confident that even after their departure, the friendly attitude would prevail. But for the Americans in the South the situation was quite different. They wanted that the withdrawal (although they did not give a clear cut

statement to this effect) of foreign troops should be preceded by the election of a "non-communist" government.<sup>38</sup> This would, the USA thought, be the proof of America's "will" and the resolve of the entire "Free World".<sup>39</sup>

When the aforesaid differences assumed serious dimensions, the US, in September 1947, asked that Korea be put on the UN agenda. The USSR attempted to block the discussions of Korea in the UN on the grounds that it fell under Moscow Agreements and that was why like other "peace treaties" <sup>it</sup> did not fall within the jurisdiction of the UN.<sup>40</sup> However, the US with the majority support managed to form United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) in November 1947.<sup>41</sup> It was supposed to facilitate and expedite the participation of the elected representatives of the Korean people to consider the Korean question and subsequently establish an independent country free from the presence of any foreign troops. The UN General Assembly recommended the holding of the elections in Korea to a National Assembly which should convene and form a National Government which, in consultation with the Commission, take over the functions of the government from the military commands of North and South Korea and arrange with the occupying powers for the complete withdrawal from Korea of their armed forces as early as practicable and if possible within ninety days.

The Commission which became "controversial"<sup>42</sup> was refused entry in North Korea and thus was unable to carry out its "mandate" of observing nation-wide elections. As a result, the majority of the UNTCOK<sup>43</sup> decided on 9 February 1948 to refer back to the UN, where the question was debated by the Interim Committee of the General Assembly. The Interim Committee decided that the UNTCOK should go ahead and observe the elections "in such parts of Korea as are accessible to the Commission".<sup>44</sup>

In accordance with the above resolution, the UNTCOK "observed" election in southern half of Korea on 10 May 1948. Later, the convening of an assembly of the elected representatives took place. This assembly was transformed to "National Assembly". Subsequently in July, the "Constitution of the Republic of Korea"<sup>45</sup> was adopted and soon after Syngmon Rhee was installed as the President of the Republic.

On the other hand, at Pyongyang in North Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was proclaimed on 9 September 1948.<sup>46</sup>

In December 1948, debate followed in the UN General Assembly on predictable lines as far as the recognition of the ROK and the DPRK was concerned. Finally, the Assembly adopted, on 12 December 1948, the resolution on Korea sponsored by the US-Australia-China (ROC).<sup>47</sup> It declared that there has been established a lawful

government over that part of Korea where the UNTCOK was able to observe the elections, and that this was the only such government in Korea. It recommended the occupying powers' early withdrawal. It gave birth to United Nations Commission on Korea (UNCK) for lending its good offices to bring about the unification of Korea and the integration of all security forces; seeking the facilitation of the removal of economic and social barriers; being available for observation and consultation in further development of the representative government; and observation of the withdrawal of occupying forces.

The US recognised the ROK after the above resolution was passed by the UN General Assembly. The US till today recognizes only this government.

V

We so far have seen two important considerations by the United <sup>States</sup> Nations with regard to Korea. First was the pursuit of economic interest in a peaceful and cooperative atmosphere (this was the aim till 1945). Second was keeping <sup>Communism</sup> ~~Commission~~ and the Soviet Union in check. But with the intensification of the cold war, the second consideration overweighed the first.

All this, however, did not mean that the USA did consider the Republic of Korea (ROK) to be vital enough for its security. This can be substantiated by the following facts.

On the inauguration day of the ROK (15 August 1948), General Mac Arthur pointed out the virtues of the "free world". He said:

Yet in this hour, as the forces of righteousness advance, the triumph is dulled by one of the great tragedies of contemporary history - an artificial barrier has divided your land. This barrier must and will be torn down. Nothing shall prevent the unity of your people as free men of a free nation. 48

It is true that the American troops remained longer than the Russians in the peninsula. But it was mainly due to the request of the then government of the ROK. However, by 29 June 1949, the US had withdrawn all its troops. Only a US Military Advisory Group remained, again, <sup>at</sup> by the native government's request.

What instead the USA did was that in line with the Vandenberg Resolution<sup>49</sup> (providing economic and security assistance to "free" countries so that a possible situation conducive to communism, could be kept away), it inaugurated a "Military Assistance Aid Programme" in 1949 for Korea.<sup>50</sup> On 26 January 1950, a Mutual Assistance Agreement was signed between the two countries. All this American military assistance provided "to preserve internal security, prevent border raids, and incursions from the north, deter armed attack from North Korea".<sup>51</sup>

Still, the American security assistance to the ROK<sup>52</sup> was being repeatedly cut by the US (so also the military help) due to the realization that bigger amount would complicate the atmosphere in the peninsula which was undergoing "constant and sizeable armed clashes and border incursions between the north and south"<sup>53</sup> in 1949.

This was revealed by the South Korean Defense Minister when he said in October 1949:

If we had our own way, we would, I am sure, have started up already. But we had to wait until they (the Americans) are ready. They keep telling us 'No', 'no', 'no', wait". 54

Similarly, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff opined that Korea was not essential for the security of the US.<sup>55</sup> Further, General Mac Arthur in a newspaper interview traced an American line of defense which left out Korea on the assumption that in an all out war, it would be a strategic liability".<sup>56</sup> Also in his famous speech of 12 January 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson left the ROK out of the American vital defense perimeter. He said:

(American) defense perimeter runs along the Aleutians to Japan and then goes to Ryukyus.... The defensive perimeter runs from Ryukyus to the Philippines island.... So far as the military security of other areas in the Pacific is concerned, it must be clear that no person can guarantee these areas against military attack. Should such an attack occur.... the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations. 57

If we take the aforesaid facts into account, what emerges is that the USA wanted, and that was why it helped, the ROK to be strong to check the tide of communism but not strong enough to undertake an adventurist course of action <sup>by</sup> to launch <sup>ing</sup> an assault on North Korea. It wanted the ROK to be powerful enough to defend itself but not <sup>offend</sup> offend anyone.

## VI

It was only after the outbreak of large-scale fighting on 25 June 1950 that the US evolved a concrete strategy toward the ROK under the hypothesis that the major responsibility for the North Korean attack rested with Moscow. Even before the war started, John F. Dulles (who, at that time was the Special Consultant to the State Department entrusted with the task of working out a peace treaty with Japan), had suspected the Soviet hand in creating trouble when he said in Seoul on 19 June 1950:

"...You (South Koreans) encounter a new menace, that of Soviet communism ... (which) has seized in its cruel embrace the Korean people to the north of the 38th parallel and .... seeks by terrorism, fraudulent propaganda infiltration and incitement to civil unrest, to enfeeble and discredit your new Republic". 58

This suspicion was confirmed, the US thought, by the outbreak of the war. President Truman in his statement on the war said:

The attack upon Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that the communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will use armed invasion and war. 59

To face the situation, President Truman made a number of decisions, the most important of them being that the United States must seek the intervention of the United Nations. A special meeting of the Security Council was called. The Council adopted two resolutions, on 25 and 27 June 1950, respectively in which it condemned the aggression of the North, made an appeal for the withdrawal of its troops, and asked member states to help meet the aggression under the leadership of the US.<sup>60</sup>

President Truman also ordered the Seventh Fleet to start from the Philippines and Okinawa for Saseko in Japan and report to the Commander of the US Naval Forces, Far East, for operational control. He also authorized Mac Arthur to use US naval and air forces in the Far East in support of the ROK.<sup>61</sup>

By its military measures, the US indicated its firm commitment to the ROK in the war. It, however, decided to make the war as "limited" as possible. It, from the very beginning - Truman made this very clear<sup>62</sup> - decided not to provoke <sup>the</sup> USSR and give <sup>it</sup> them a pretext to join the war. It also decided to respect the borders and keep off the territories of mainland China, so that military action might not extend to those areas.

The most important of all the reasons that can be attributed to such an American action was that the US thought that "the Soviets wished to avoid an all out

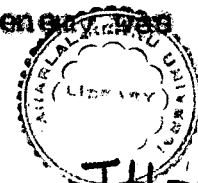




confrontation with the US, but the Korean attack by proxy, might have been designed to divert American attention and resources to Korea in order to make some other area (obviously Europe) more vulnerable to a Soviet move".<sup>63</sup> This assumption persisted even after the Chinese entered the war in late <sup>October</sup> ~~November~~ 1950.<sup>64</sup>

But this assumption was sharply in contrast with that of General Mac Arthur who suggested, after the Chinese got involved in the war, for expanding the theatre of the operation by "(1) expanding a blockade of the coast of China, (2) launching air and naval bombardments of Chinese industry, (3) using Chinese Nationalist reinforcements in Korea, and (4) using the Nationalist troops to launch diversionary attacks on the mainland of China".<sup>65</sup> As a result sharp differences arose between Mac Arthur and President Truman, who now was looking for a speedy end of the war. Mac Arthur was recalled and negotiations to end the war started.

Thus it is quite clear that Korean war was "limited" from the point of view of the US. Its involvement in the conflict was designed to demonstrate to the communists the inadvisability of an adventurist course of action in Asia. It was the demonstration of the willingness of the US that it "would fight a war in the Far East only if its adversaries provoked it to do so", and that it "would resort to retaliatory measures only if the action of the enemy was serious enough to justify them".<sup>66</sup>



## VII

Seen from the South Korean government's point of view, the war was very crucial as it was a question of the survival of the political system. For ensuring this survival, Syngman Rhee, the then President of the ROK exploited very well the war produced situation - the intensification of the cold war and the primary concern of the US to preserve the unity and integrity of its allies and friends, but at the same time not to escalate war and thus avoid the participation of the USSR and China.

Rhee influenced the conduct of the US in various ways.<sup>67</sup> He asked for the assistance, mainly the military aid. This was promptly supplied.

Rhee called for cooperation. On 15 July 1950 he wrote to Mac Arthur: "In view of the joint military effort of the UN on behalf of the ROK .... I am happy to assign to you command authority over all land, sea and air force of the ROK during the period of the continuation of the present hostilities...."<sup>68</sup> It demonstrated, thus, that the ROK was more willing to accept the leadership of the US and thereby bringing into a position to influence the American policy in general. This in any case would have been inevitable. But by moving before his hand was forced, Rhee managed to establish close rapport with Mac Arthur which subsequently paid dividends.

Similarly, Rhee bargained vigorously with Dwight G. Eisenhower for getting the security commitments. His diplomacy included the refusal to cooperate with the US in the war efforts (when the US started negotiations) by pulling out the ROK forces ~~out of~~<sup>from</sup> the UN command and threatening the US that the ROK would continue the fight alone and therefore the US should withdraw from its (ROK) territory.<sup>69</sup> Rhee also demanded that the "US should establish a buffer zone along with Korean-Chinese-Russian borders", thereby meaning "a buffer strip on the north side of Korea (the entire peninsula) be established, supervised and maintained by the UN command until permanent peace was established in the Far East".<sup>70</sup>

Although unrealistic and empty threat, all these were a worth-while gambling by Rhee. For, the main concern of the US was whether the ROK would force the US into a larger conflict with the Chinese. The US, thus, to avoid such a possibility, wanted to dissuade Rhee by assuring him that the US would not renounce its efforts by all peaceful means to effect the unification of Korea (it should be noted that Rhee was insisting that the war had provided the proper opportunity to unify, by force, the country); that it "was prepared promptly, at the conclusion of an acceptable armistice to negotiate with him (Rhee) a mutual defense treaty along the lines of the treaties heretofore made between the US and the Republic of Philippines, the US and the Dominion of New Zealand", and that

"the US Government, subject to requisite Congressional appropriations, would continue economic aid to the ROK to permit restoration of its devastated land".<sup>71</sup>

It is against this background that the Mutual Defense Treaty<sup>72</sup> between the ROK and the US was signed on 1 October 1953 and that came into force after the ratification in both the countries on 17 November 1954.

The preamble of the Treaty declares the parties' common interest in maintaining peace in the Pacific area and their intention to depend on bilateral collective defense until completing a "comprehensive and effective" regional security system in the area.

Secretary Dulles said before the hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 3 January 1954 that "It is doubtful that Korean war would have broken out if the communist aggressors had known in advance what the US and the UN would do. They miscalculated".<sup>73</sup> Thus, according to the US, the major purpose of the treaty was to prevent any renewal of communist aggression based on miscalculation and give to the ROK a formal guarantee of America's commitment in the event of possible external aggression in the future.

Article 3 is the "core" of the Treaty. It declares:

Each party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the parties in the territories now under their respective administrative control, or hereafter recognised

by one of the parties as lawfully brought under the administrative control of the other, would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.

The fact that <sup>the</sup> ROK actually controls half of the Korean territory was reflected in this Article and was subsequently clarified by Dulles during the hearings. He said that the treaty "clearly does not apply to territories which are not now under the administrative control of either country...."<sup>74</sup> Thus, an armed attack by the ROK on North Korea does not obligate the US to come to former's assistance.

"Constitutional processes" are other important subjects covered in the Article 3. According to the US interpretation, the term implies that the use of armed forces (by the US) will be decided upon by the Congress and the Executive jointly.<sup>75</sup> But it is not necessary to get Congressional approval for the disposal or deployment of existing troops within the territory of a party to a defense arrangement the US is participating in.<sup>76</sup>

In case of armed attack, the problem of obligations occurs. As far as the USA is concerned, two principles govern its obligations. The first is the Rio Treaty formula that "an attack on one is considered an attack against all".<sup>77</sup> This means the "automatic" involvement

of the US in a conflict to which her alliance partner is a party (NATO is an example of such type).

The second is the "Monroe Doctrine Formula" which implies that "any armed attack against any of the parties will be considered dangerous to the peace and safety of others" and "in the event of such an attack each party would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes".<sup>78</sup> All treaties except those based on Rio-pact patterns, are of this type as the Senate was concerned that the treaties of the NATO type might force the US to make war without the approval of the Congress".<sup>79</sup>

Thus, the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty makes use of the Monroe formula. As a result the nature of the actions to be taken in the case of an eventual conflict on the basis of the treaty obligations will be dependent upon the Congressional decision. And, the Congress will take the decision by taking into account the nation's interest at the given point of time and the nature of the case. Hence the obligations are political rather than the legal.

### VIII

However, the maneuverability that the US has in its treaty commitments to the ROK was never applied till the end of the 1960s. The US support for Korean security was being affirmed from time to time through the joint

communiqués<sup>80</sup> issued after the Presidential meetings (of ROK and the US) of 1965, 1966, 1968 and 1969, and none of them extended the US commitment originally stated in the Treaty. Both the countries in all these meetings reaffirmed the utility of the Treaty. It was also agreed (always) by the US that it would continue to maintain "powerful forces in Korea at the request of the Korean government" and provide "larger US assistance to meet the Korean defense effort".

All these joint communiques, it should be made clear, made no commitment to the ROK as far as the maintenance of the US forces of any kind in the ROK or their duration was concerned. The US, however, did agree, as the joint communiques reflected, that the ROK would be consulted before any substantial reduction of the number of the armed forces in the ROK took place.

On the other hand, throughout the sixties, the US provided huge military and other economic assistance to the ROK. This is evidenced from the fact that the US bore as late as 1970, 40.1 per cent (in the previous years the ratio was much higher) of total defense budget of the ROK, apart from spending a huge sum for the maintenance of its own troops in the peninsula - the estimation of the expense of 1968, 1969 and 1970 taken together amounted to 2,099,316 million dollars.<sup>81</sup>

Broadly, three factors mattered to the American policy makers as far as the USA's military commitment to the ROK was concerned. First, in the late 1950s, "changes in the nuclear balance of terror between the two super powers" had ushered in an era of nuclear stalemate and thus diminished the nuclear strategic significance of the USA's perimeter bases ringing the Soviet Union and China, but "not their conventional military significance".<sup>82</sup> For the US, the new era of 1960s would be one of preparing for "limited war", a fact reflected concretely in 1959 with the start of the joint tactical exercises (including the use of nuclear weapons) between the US Pacific forces and the "client" military establishments in the region which included Korea. The value of the ROK was now upgraded.

Secondly, the ROK was considered to be vital for the security of Japan.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, American bases in Japan were most advantageous for the strategic outer-line operations in the Korean peninsula, a fact which was ~~evidently~~ reflected during the Korean war. The point is that the US interest aimed at somewhat, as we will see in the coming chapters, strategic integration of both Japan and the ROK. This was put into concrete shape by the normalization of relations between the ROK and Japan in 1965, thanks to the US pressure, and later



in 1969 in Sato-Nixon joint communique which interlinked the security of Japan and the ROK.<sup>84</sup>

The third factor was the Indo-China conflict and the participation of the ROK in it.<sup>85</sup> The latter played a "mercenary" role to fulfil the objectives of America's Asian policy. The US requested and the ROK dispatched in 1965 its troops to Vietnam to fight the communists. Of <sup>we</sup> ~~many~~ <sup>many</sup> reasons for the positive response of the ROK, important was its motive to strengthen the alliance with the US. There were several aspects of this line of thinking.<sup>86</sup> Some desires were directed to the specific issues in the US-ROK security relationship. For example, hope arose that "Seoul might be able to obtain a long sought change in the mutual security treaty, namely, a NATO-type clause which would bind the US to respond automatically (as in the case of NATO) in case of aggression".

There was also the concern, and it was more important to the ROK, that the US might transfer some of its military units in the ROK to Vietnam. Thus the ROK's participation in Vietnam was to forestall such American transfers.

Besides, many potential and financial benefits, including the military assistance to modernise the ROK forces - the ROK bargained with the US for it - were in the offing as a result of its involvement in Vietnam.<sup>87</sup>

Out of the analysis that we have made so far, two points emerge. First, a concrete strategy for the alliance between the USA and the ROK was given only after the outbreak of the Korean war in the sense that now-onwards the ROK figured prominently in the security interests of the US and Japan. Seen from the ROK's point of view, the political structure of the State was conditioned by the fact of American military occupation soon after the end of the World War II. The ruling circles since then started depending upon the American commitment for the security of the ROK and this happened to be a major pillar of their foreign and security policy.

Foot Notes

## CHAPTER I

- 1 For a brief historical background, see "1882 Pact Opened Korea-US Ties", The Korea Herald, 22 May 1982.
- 2 Hahm Pyong-choon, "Perception of America Matures With Time", The Korea Herald, 26 May 1982.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Donald G. Tweksbury, compiled, Source Materials on Korean Politics and Ideologies (New York, 1950), p.5.
- 5 Ibid., p.4.
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- 7 Hahm Pyong-choon, n.2, p.5.
- 8 Lee Won-sul, "Far But Near ! A Century of Korea-US Ties", Korea News Review (Seoul), vol.11, no.1, 2 January 1982, p.10.
- 9 See the text of the letter in D.G. Tweksbury, n.4, pp.23-25.
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- 17 Cumings, n.13, pp.43-44.
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- 24 Ibid., p.123.
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- 26 See the text in the Foreign Relations of the US (1945), vol.6, pp.1073-91.
- 27 See Cunings, n.13, pp.48-58.
- 28 See for details, E. Grant Meade, American Military Government in Korea (New York, 1951).
- 29 Ibid., p.224.
- 30 Macdonald, First Year of Military Government in Korea, p.30.
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- 33 For details, cold war, in our opinion, started only after the failure to keep the agreements reached at in Potsdam Conference, i.e. in 1946. See a brilliant study by Raymond Aron, The Imperial Republic (New Delhi, 1975 - Indian Reprint, 1975), pp.9-42.
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- 35 For details, see Gregory Henderson, Korea, The Politics of Vortex (Harvard University Press, 1968), pp.113-47.
- 36 Park Hong-Kiyu, "American-Soviet Rivalry in Korea : 1945-1948", Korea Journal (Seoul), vol.22, no.3, March 1982, p.10.

- 37 For details, see Ibid., pp.5-12.
- 38 Frank Baldwin in his introduction opines this.  
See, n.13, p.8.
- 39 Ibid.
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- 59 "US Policy in Korean Crisis", Department of State Publications, No.3922, July 1950, p.13.
- 60 See the Resolutions in Tewksbury, n.4.
- 61 Roy E. Appleman, United States Army in the Korean War, South to the Na'tong, North to the Yalu, June-November 1950 (Washington, D.C., 1950), p.38.
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- 67 For a better comprehensive picture, see Chang Jin Park, "The Influence of Small States Upon the Super Powers : US-South Korean Relations as a Case Study, 1950-53", World Politics (Princeton), vol.28, 1975-76, pp.97-117.
- 68 Quoted, Ibid., p.102.
- 69 Ibid., p.110.
- 70 Ibid., p.105.
- 71 Quoted, Ibid., p.111.
- 72 See the text in the Hearings Before the Sub-Committee on US Security Agreements and Commitments & A-Broad of the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, 91 Congress, Second Session, Part 6 (Washington, D.C., 1970), pp.1716-17.  
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- 75 Ibid., pp.35-36.
- 76 Ibid., p.36.
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## CHAPTER II

## SECURITY PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROK DURING THE 1970S

## I

National security may be defined as the condition of freedom of a nation-state so that it is in a position (has capacity) to withstand challenges to its own "territorial integrity and political and socio-economic order".<sup>1</sup>

The degree of the security is relative because it depends upon the threat perception of the government leaders of the threatened state. The perception is partly based on objective considerations of its own and its enemies' capabilities. The other part of the perception rests on "the personalities of the leaders and morale of the people".<sup>2</sup>

The very fact that the perception is made by the people in power - and once in power, the people want to be in it continuously - the security of a state has the domestic factors attached to it. The domestic challenge to the "regime" can be perceived as a security threat.

Secondly, the absence of an external threat, be it physical or ideological (hence security), might have been due to - and this is particularly true in the post-World War II period - the deterrent effect of the alliance, either bilateral or collective, to which a state belongs, particularly when it is weaker one. So any disorder in this alliance framework causes a security concern to the member of the alliance. On the other hand, if a nation



state is not tied with any alliance, then in its external action, it pursues "tension reducing"<sup>3</sup> diplomacy to remain secured. Thus security is a major component of the foreign policy of a state.

Thirdly, in the absence of either the assistance or the "effectiveness" of the alliance or in the face of a "diplomatic isolation", a nation-state relies on its own resources to mobilize its military strength to a very high degree. Thus security is linked to the defense (military) policy of a state.

In summary, the security of a state is dependent upon the "triology" of domestic policy, foreign policy and ~~the~~ military policy. For maintaining the security, a state stands to undertake the following measures.<sup>4</sup>

First, it has to maintain the territorial integrity of the state and its political, economic and social order.

Secondly, it has to identify major challenges and threats (their types, levels and intensities) and the forms of appropriate action, both initiatory and responsive, to ensure adequate defense.

Thirdly, it has to undertake, as a continuing activity, to maximize its capability (power) to maintain itself through external action (alliance, <sup>and</sup> tension reducing diplomacy) and internal action (mobilization of human and material resources).

## II

In the ROK, the military has been exercising tremendous influence over the state's polity. It has been ruled since 1961 (May), first by the Army men up to 1963, and then by the "Army men in civilian clothes" (we will see it now)." As the analysis of the factors leading to the heralding of military rule in the ROK are beyond the ken of this study, suffice will it be to point out that Syngman Rhee, the first President of the ROK was overthrown from power by a students' movement in April 1960. Soon after, a constitutional government (Second Republic), headed by Yun Po-son as the President and Chang Myon as the Premier, was established.<sup>5</sup> This regime was short-lived as a successful military coup took place against it on 16 May 1961.

Park Chung-hee, the brain behind the coup and the then Brigadier-General, pledged that the junta would "recreate the country by eradicating all corruption and social evil, by promoting a fresh morale by rejuvenating the national spirit and by attaining self-supporting economy".<sup>6</sup> Upon completion of its missions, he promised to turn over governmental control to "clean conscientious civilians" and return to military duties.<sup>7</sup>

The junta's direct rule lasted almost two and half years. In 1963, it sponsored a new constitution and helped create Korea's Third Republic.<sup>8</sup> All of the junta's

leaders did not return to the barracks because of the consequent elections to the National Assembly and Presidency held in 1963 (October-November). Instead, many of them retired from active military service to emerge as civilian politicians. General Park, as standard bearer of the junta-created Democratic Republican Party, became President in 1963. To strengthen his position further, Park in 1972 (December) introduced another constitution (Yushin). This made "the election of the President indirect in order to prevent the divisive tendency attendant upon the direct election of the President";<sup>9</sup> Like this, Park served in the capacity of the President until his assassination in 1979.

Park was never popular among the students, intellectuals, politicians without military background, church leaders, etc. for his authoritarianism.<sup>10</sup> People's disenchantment with him was reflected in 1971 Presidential elections when the opposition candidate Kim Dae-jung came very close to win<sup>ing</sup> the Presidency.

It was the military in which Park had the strongest power base. Before going into details, let it be pointed out, paradoxical although it seems, that Korea has a poor history about the influence of the army in the society. Civilian supremacy had been there always.

Even during the Japanese colonial regime, resistance to the rule came from the brave guerrillas, but no Korean army worthy of the word existed from 1907 until 1946.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, General Hodge, during the occupation period, tried to create a Korean military defense unit. But the policy-makers in Washington considered the pros and cons of the proposal. Finally, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) decided that the proposal for a Korean Army be postponed until the joint Commission (USA-USSR) negotiations were held.<sup>12</sup> The reason for this thinking was not to do anything that might annoy the Russians plus lack of equipment, books, training and the willingness on the part of the American personnel to stay with the job".<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, an alternative plan called the "Bamboo Plan"<sup>14</sup> was presented. This envisaged constabulary-type police reserve established on a "fixed-post-camp-station" basis under the Bureau of Police. The plan was to send out a US Army training team of two officers and four enlisted men to each province where they would select initial activation and training areas and begin recruiting and organizing. As the difficulty in the implementation was the language barrier, English schools were also to be set up.

However, the training that was given was insufficient and even in it the traditional Japanese techniques remained intact.<sup>15</sup> By the time of Korean war, only sixteen out of the ROK's sixty-seven battalions had gone through the battalion stage of training, and none had gone through

the regimental training. "Not until 1955 did a Korean clan with first-rate officer training graduate".<sup>16</sup>

It is during the Korean war that the army's ascendancy began. It became the most important source of American funds. Its connection with politics constantly increased in such forms as an alliance between the Defense Minister, the Chief of ~~the~~ Staff and the Chairman of the ruling Liberal Party.<sup>17</sup> "The ascending spiral rose from 1951 on, to the highest reaches of the State. From it came much of the politics of those years. Rhee realized that the war-swollen army, no longer separable from politics, must be employed. He had created neither factionalism nor corruption, but he was skilled in using them to establish firm controls. His strategy was to prevent the accretion of any single faction or leader in control. His tactic was to play the chief army groups off against each other by encouraging their struggle for the Chief of Staff and other key positions. His technique was to use corruption, its investigation and punishment, as the periodic means of effecting changes".<sup>18</sup>

Syngman Rhee, during the later part of his regime increasingly manipulated army<sup>19</sup> to deliver the soldier vote for the government through the technique cited above. The rapid reshuffling of the Chiefs of Staff reawakened a "pattern" of intense competition for that position and encouraged close relations between politicians and

generals. This aroused strong disapproval in the lower ranks of the military.<sup>20</sup> It formented the plans for a military coup which subsequently got forestalled by the the students' revolution. However, one rates the plan, what is important is that the reaction of younger group against a discredited "pattern" had much to do with the coup's capacity to gain acceptance sufficient for survival.<sup>21</sup> The "inevitability" of which its leadership so often spoke lay (id) not in the faults of the civilian regime that preceded it, faulty as they were, but in the war-propelled rise of the military and the disciplined American-supported institutions that accompanied it. These made the Korean army an unrivalled holder of skills, managerial techniques, specialization, and newly acquired ways of building and maintaining institutions..... Having acquired in Korea, for the first time since the thirteenth century, a position as the most dominant organization, the army found ample grounds for dissatisfaction.... As important as the army's size and its self-imposed 'saviour from destruction' image were the surface tensions generic to many armies but here found with Korean acuteness the war-time army had been a ladder of extremely rapid fulfilment for the ambitions who lacked other privilege; now this ladder was blocked at the very time that frustrated ambition could combine with national sentiment. The coup had ambivalent scores to settle".<sup>22</sup>

Since then a country with such a long tradition of civilian rule as Korea has been under the influence of the military. Although the military rule in the strict sense of the term, ended, as already noted, in 1963, the strong grip of the armed forces, either directly or indirectly, over the ROK's policy has yet to be slackened.<sup>23</sup>

This domestic setting of the ROK - military rule in disguise - is highly important while studying the ROK's security problem. This is in keeping with our earlier discussion on the concept of security that internal challenge to a regime can be perceived by the rulers as a security threat. Park's regime, due to its very nature, could not have been very secure. Therefore, Park sought to emphasize the point, for its survival, his regime was "indispensable" in the face of the on-going threat that the state faced. Needless to say that often these 'threats' were "manufactured, explained and finally sold".<sup>25</sup>

### III(A)

Historically, Japan, Russia and China had tried to keep Korea in their respective sphere of influence for the sheer fact that Korea under any of the other two would pose as a threat to its own vital interests, including physical security. This was proved true when Korea became a colony of Japan. On the other hand, from Korea's point of view, its immediate security environment was conditioned by the designs of Japan, China and Russia.

The aforesaid historical setting and its relevance (or irrelevance) cannot go unnoticed while discussing the ROK's security perception. In addition, and this is more important, a qualitative change had taken place in the environment after the ROK came into being. Korea was divided into two halves - both following diametrically opposite socio-economic-political orders. Secondly, China and Russia (Soviet Union), as far as ROK was concerned, were akin to North Korea ideologically. Thirdly, the sustenance of the Seoul regime (hence the political structure) depended upon the support provided by the US. As a result both <sup>the</sup> ROK and the US later became the alliance partners. To put these things differently, the effective security of the ROK meant the cautious guarding, with the support and help of the USA, against the "hostile" North Korea, China and the Soviet Union. The alliance with the USA was equally important for taking care of a possible, not probable, Japanese menace as Japan was closely tied with the US. Otherwise, Japan did not pose a 'threat' to the ROK because of a number of changes introduced during the post-war years.

However, toward the end of the sixties perceptible disturbances were noticed in the ROK's security (from the ROK's point of view). Efforts had been made for bringing about a detente between the USA and the USSR (who so far had been trying to weaken each other as much and as fast



as possible). Another but equally remarkable development concerning the rapprochement between the US and the communist China was on the cards. All these made the ROK ~~to~~ reevaluate its security environment.

We need not trace here the factors responsible for American policy change as the coming chapter will be fully devoted for this purpose. We will point out only some concrete American actions that had repercussions on ROK's security perceptions.

In 1969, President Richard Nixon declared at Guam - and this became famous as <sup>the</sup> Nixon Doctrine - that hence-forward the US would gradually reduce its military pressure in Asia. It was further clarified that the US would provide nuclear defense only to those nations which were involved in a total war to which either communist China or the USSR was a party. Known otherwise as the policy of "de-Americanization",<sup>26</sup> Nixon doctrine implied, as we will see in the next chapter, basically two things. They were the self-reliant defense by the American Asian allies and regional security alliance with leading nations in respective regions playing a pivotal role in North East Asia. Keeping with this line, the US, as late as 1969, made it clear that it would reduce its troops level to one combat division of 20,000 men in the ROK by June 1971.<sup>27</sup>

Thus by the early 1970, the rulers in the ROK saw a scenario in which the American involvement in, or

attachment with their state was under a shadow of doubt. To put it differently, the effectiveness of the alliance with the USA was apprehended by the South Koreans. Therefore, it will be proper, given this background, to find out how the ROK perceived the PRC, the USSR and North Korea as far as its security was concerned.<sup>28</sup>

Sino-American rapprochement was seen in ROK as the result of the two countries' intention to contain the "Soviet expansionism".<sup>29</sup> But the ROK rightly assessed that in one area both the USA and the PRC agreed to disagree. That was on the Korean question. The PRC continued (till today) its policy of supporting and recognizing the DPRK only. Thus in the joint communique issued after President Nixon visited China in 1972 at Shanghai, China stated that "it firmly supports the eight-point programme for the peaceful unification of Korea put forward by the DPRK", that "it stands for the abolition of the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation for Korea".<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, when the PRC was admitted to the UN, its delegate in his maiden address, it was emphasized by Park Chung-hee himself several times,<sup>31</sup> reemphasised his country's position that it supports the North Korean approach for the reunification of the peninsula.<sup>32</sup>

Two reasons were attributed to such a Chinese attitude.<sup>33</sup> First, China did not want to discontinue its support to North Korea as this action would take that state closer to Moscow. Secondly, Beijing's advocacy of the liberation of Taiwan and Pyongyang's policy toward the ROK were <sup>based</sup> ~~founded~~ <sup>similar</sup> on common strategy.

However, the ROK did not consider China as hostile towards it as it did in 1950s. Park Chung-hee admitted it when he said that North Korea might not get the ready support from communist China to its plan of "forcible communization" of the ROK because of the peace mood between the US and communist China.<sup>34</sup>

Nor China would get militarily involved in another Korean war, as was the case in 1950, as that would mean a setback to the normalization process with the US which because of its treaty commitments to the ROK, would not set idle. Thus, the ROK perceived that the PRC, although unfriendly (or would continue to be) was not hostile to the ROK as far as its physical existence was concerned.

The USSR was feared by the ROK because of the former's idea of Asian collective security.<sup>35</sup> Although the concept was not free from ambiguity, it was important to mark the speech of a Soviet delegate on Korean question in the 29th UN General Assembly in December 1974. He said:

The strengthening of security in Asia on a collective basis with the participation of all the states is in keeping with the spirit of times and interests of the peoples of that great continent. Therefore, the Soviet Union

will continue to support the positive efforts of Asian countries seeking reliable solutions to the problems of peace and security on that continent. There is no doubt that a settlement of the Korean problem would make an important contribution to improving the situation not only in the Far East but in Asia as a whole.

Although the plan for collective security did not meet much success, <sup>the above</sup> that Soviet position on Korea did not change throughout the seventies substantially. Rather, in 1975 the Soviet Union declared very explicitly its support of North Korean demand for the withdrawal of foreign troops.<sup>37</sup>

All these were seen in the HOK as the attempt (Soviet) to destabilize the political and social status of the Korean peninsula. It was argued<sup>38</sup> that Soviet plan for an Asian collective security was different in nature than its idea of collective security in Europe. It was to legitimize its control over territories it had under its troops during the world war II that Moscow predicted its "collective security concept of inviolability of its political and territorial vested rights in Europe". In Asia, "the same principle is used to reject the territorial claims of communist China and Japan. Communist China wishes for status quo based on the continued military presence of the US in Asia, though taking an exceptional stand with regard to Korea. In the same vein, despite its professed interests in detente and collective security, <sup>the</sup> Soviet

Union does not seem to favour the stabilizing of the political and social status of the Korean peninsula; it rather tends to regard Korea as a possible arena for anti-imperialist movement".<sup>39</sup>

Thus, seen from the ROK's point of view, both the PRC and the USSR, despite their rivalry, supported, independently although, <sup>the</sup> North Korean approach towards the solution of the Korean problem. But, they wanted to avert a development, at least in the 1970s, that may lead to an all out clash with the US. The US-USSR detente for the Soviet Union and Sino-American normalization for the PRC seemed to have been of considerable importance to the policy makers in Moscow and Peking. But what was feared in the ROK was that in a situation in which North Korea attacked the South, the Soviet Union and communist China, though dissatisfied, might not come against North Korea openly.<sup>40</sup>

As far as Japan was concerned, it was the only country in the region with which the ROK had been maintaining diplomatic relations since 1965. As has been pointed out earlier, <sup>the</sup> Nixon doctrine implied the importance of the regional alliances under the leadership of strongest power in the region in facing the security threats to the countries of the region. In the North East Asian context, Japan was to play the leadership role.

But the ROK had serious reservations about Japan playing the leadership role. First, the historical factor, i.e. Japan's inhuman colonial policy which had a devastating effect on Korea, could be attributed to such an attitude. Secondly, the ROK leadership recognised the fact that Japan had become a power on the basis of its economic strength. Therefore, Japan, to protect its expanding economy - raw material in the countries which provide them, the markets that are available in the countries belonging to the surrounding region, and most importantly trade routes - would have to strengthen its self-defence forces. But this, according to the South Koreans,<sup>42</sup> did not mean that Japan would be expected to promptly respond to the US request for military intervention in case a friendly regime was threatened. For, the basic goal of the Japanese reinforcement of military power was to protect its own economic interests. Thirdly, Japan, it was argued, was constrained by its own constitutional framework to launch a military programme strong enough to come militarily to the rescue of the ROK. <sup>Finally</sup> ~~Partly~~, and this was the most important consideration, Japan, although according to the Sato-Nixon communique in 1969 believed in the integration of the security of Japan and the ROK; perceived <sup>a</sup> threat not from North Korea, but from its communist neighbours.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand,

Japan gave sufficient hints that it believed in the concept of "two Koreas" thereby meaning the internationalization of the existing arrangement in the peninsula.<sup>44</sup> Besides, if Japan made inroad into the ROK militarily, both the PRC and the USSR would be alarmed due to historical reasons and therefore would show more concern about the peninsula. This, in effect, would worsen further the security environment of the ROK.

### III(B)

No other state than North Korea did bother so much the rulers of the ROK during the 1970s from the security point of view. Understandably, both the ROK and DPRK (North Korea) based on the conflicting ideologies as they were, never failed to emphasize the fact that <sup>each</sup> they alone represented the whole nation. In other words, both the regimes maintained (are maintaining till today) the stand that the division of the peninsula back in 1945 was unreal and hence needed to be corrected, but under their respective terms. The official declarations of both the states made this clear in unambiguous terms. What was important here was the modalities of the reunification; for both Seoul and Pyongyang had mutual suspicions about whether the reunification process would be violent or peaceful. Although, they advocated the peaceful means - this we would see in details in the later section of this chapter - the element of doubt about violent, i.e. forceful or military,

means for attaining the goal (unification) persisted very much in the minds of the rulers of the ROK. In the following pages we would narrate the "events" that led to such suspicions. Whether they were genuine or not would not be our concern as our purpose is to see how the ROK perceived the threat, although few words would be said about this toward the end of the chapter.

At the outset it should be very clear that <sup>the</sup> South Koreans were of the opinion that North Korea could not launch an attack as what it did in 1950 because of three things.<sup>45</sup> They were the Sino-US rapprochement, the USA-USSR detente and above all the Sino-Soviet rivalry. In this situation, North Korea could not expect as it did in 1950, the support from either the PRC or the USSR. As a result, it was argued, North Korea, instead of a big-scale war, ~~to-disrupt~~ would attempt a limited attack or guerrilla type war to disrupt public order and security in the South. Nevertheless, Seoul did not exclude the possibility of an all-out war.<sup>46</sup> It was argued<sup>47</sup> that North Korea would certainly carry out total war if it thought it would occupy the South before the USA intervened in the war. Therefore it was pointed out that the ROK must be on guards both against limited (guerrilla) war and total war.



We now would see what were considered to be the aggressive designs of North Korea. <sup>The</sup> First was the nature of the very ideology that North Korea professed to believe in, i.e. communism. Here we quote a Minister in the Park's government. He said:

Communism is rich with all sorts of rhetorics and theories. But its strategy is fundamentally based on a philosophy of strength through hatred.... only. When they (communists) are inferior in strength in comparison with their rival forces do they seek coexistence or dialogue. Thus co-existence or dialogue (North Korea was advocating for dialogue to achieve unification) is never an end in itself but just a means of self-defense to earn time to gain a relative superiority of strength. <sup>48</sup>

Once superiority attained, attack would be launched. This was exactly what was meant by well-known Chinese communist tactic as expressed in the slogan, "Talk, Then Attack, and Attack, Then Talk". <sup>49</sup>

Secondly, according to the ROK, North Korea had not renounced the option of forcible unification of the peninsula. This became obvious from the broadcast by Radio Pyongyang on 3 July 1972, on the eve of the announcement of the historic South-North joint communique of 4 July. The broadcast said:

- "(a) Unification of the fatherland can be achieved only after the withdrawal of American troops and victory of the revolutionary forces of the people's democracy in the South.
- (b) Unification of the fatherland is possible only when circumstances to a successful revolution in the South....

- (c) Unification.... can be attained only when.... revolution (is) carried out throughout Korea under the banner of DPRK.
- (d) Unification of the fatherland may be achieved by both peaceful and non-peaceful means; revolution in the South can be carried out only by violent means". 50

These represented, the argument went, the basic position that the communists had been maintaining since 1955 by not ruling out, thus communizing by "a war of national liberation".

Thirdly, no less a man than Kim Il-sung in his visit to Beijing (Peking) on 15 August 1975, said at a banquet:

If the revolution takes place in South Korea, we, as one and the same nation, will not just look at it with folded arms but will strongly support the South Korean people. If the enemy ignites war recklessly, we shall resolutely answer it with war and completely destroy the aggressors. In this war we only will lose the military demarcation line and will join country's reunification. 51

Thus Kim's trip to Beijing reaffirmed North Korea's revolutionary strategy towards the ROK, it was argued.

Fourthly, according to <sup>the</sup> Seoul government, several incidents took place in the late sixties and the early seventies which manifested North Korea's conflicting attitude. The US submarine Pueblo was seized in January 1968 by the North Koreans.<sup>52</sup> In the same year, North Korea had a plot, unsuccessful though, to "assassinate"

President Park.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the North Koreans shoot down, over international waters, an SC-121 reconnaissance air plane on 15 April 1969.<sup>54</sup> In the early 1970s, Seoul pointed out that the North Korean communists infiltrated different political parties and government offices in the ROK to instigate factionalism and distrust, thereby taking advantage of the latest discontent among the populace which became apparent in mass uprisings in 1971.<sup>55</sup> In the years 1976 and 1977, according to <sup>the</sup> Seoul regime, there were many intrusions by North Korean armed forces into the demilitarized zone.<sup>56</sup> The most important of all the North Korean provocative actions and the consequent preparedness, it was alleged, was the discovery of three North Korean dug underground tunnels in 1973 - each capable of moving a regiment of troops through it in the space of an hour constructed under the DMZ. Search for these tunnels was sparked by information from a North Korean defector in 1974.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, it was seriously apprehended, as Park Chung-hee said as late as 1972, that North Korea was ready to launch an attack on the South. He said:

I estimate that during the past ten years, the North Korean communists have almost completed preparation for a war designed to unify the country by force through communication. I think that the various estimates made by us were correct, as has been verified by the recent remarks of Tokyo Governor Minobe before foreign newsmen in Tokyo upon his return from the recent visit to

Pyongyang.... He (Minabe) is not from the Liberal Democratic Party. He is from the Socialist Party or the Communist Party. At any rate, he is from an opposition party, who was invited by Kim Il-sung and was accorded warm hospitality in North Korea. Despite this, upon his return from North Korea, he said from what he had seen in North Korea that frankly communist North Korea has already completed its preparation for war, and he was under the impression that war is in progress. Our consolidate estimate of the situation during the period is in accord with his remarks. 58

Interestingly, the Military Balance published from London in its issue of 1973-74 surveyed that on the basis of the population of the respective countries, the percentage of armed forces in DPRK was greater than that of the ROK (470,000 armed forces, out of the population of 15,000,000 in DPRK; whereas the ratio in the ROK being 633,500:32,665,000). In 1973 the defense budget of the DPRK showed at \$620 million compared to ROK's \$476 million despite the fact that the estimated GNP of the ROK in 1972 (\$9.3 billion) was nearly three times that of the DPRK (\$3.5 billion).<sup>59</sup> According to the SIPRI, it was found out that till 1970, at least, North Korea spent more money in defense than South Korea.<sup>60</sup>

In such a scenario drawn by the Seoul regime, in which the threat from North Korea loomed large, communist China and the Soviet Union still gave credibility to Kim Il-sung and American commitment to the ROK disappointingly was in doubt, the policy options of Park Chung-hee are worth finding out.

## IV(A)

Park Chung-hee reacted to the situation by adopting a policy which aimed at two different but contradictory ends (at least it appeared to be so). On the one hand, the seemingly weakening American connection made him realize the uncertainty of the possible option of contributing everything to further the intensification of the hostile environment in the peninsula so as to make the situation for him to bring about a reunification of the nation which continued to be the most emotional issue for the leadership in both the South and the North to exploit most for "its survival". Therefore, as a realistic approach to the national unification, which ~~and~~ the authorities on Korea agree to be inseparable while analysing the security problems of the ROK (DRRK too), the South Korean government, through President Park's declaration on 15 August 1970 for peaceful unification<sup>61</sup>, proposed that South Korea and North Korea approach unification in such a way as to contend the superiority between the two different systems through conditional open competition. It was significant in the sense that it suggested the possibility that the policy for unification of Korea might be drastically transformed as the circumstances would require in the future and that it conditionally defined North Korea as the contending opponent.

The important consequence of this approach was the South-North (Korea) Red Cross Representatives' meeting (a link for gradual contact and conversation between the two halves of the peninsula) in August 1971.<sup>62</sup> This was followed by several rounds of meetings which continued till 28 August 1973 - when the process came to a halt,<sup>63</sup> the reason being the well-known accusations by the South about the subversive activities of the North.<sup>64</sup> But what was more important was the fact that henceforward the ROK in its major foreign policy pronouncements advocated, at least, for negotiations rather than the confrontations with the DPRK. To counter the significant diplomatic victories of North Korea in the period between 1973 to 1975 - membership in the World Health Organization (WHO), getting<sup>an</sup> invitation to participate as an observer on the Korean debate in the UN General Assembly, giving<sup>an</sup> invitation to American journalists and Japanese businessmen to visit the State<sup>65</sup> - the ROK went up to support the US stand, conditional although, of the dissolution of the UN Command on the completion of alternative arrangements.<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, the ROK proposed "the admission of the ROK and North Korea to the UN as an interim measure pending the unification of Korea .... (as) a realistic proposal designed to eliminate tension between South and North Korea and promote peace and security on the Korean peninsula".<sup>67</sup>

## IV (B)

While maintaining the cautious approach for a rapprochement with North Korea in the 1970s, Park Chung-hee on the other hand, emphasized on the defense preparedness. He said:

We do not mean to push North for armed unification or to provoke a war, but simply to take such measures as are necessary for the protection of our own lives and freedom .... (there is) no sinister in this .... Of course, no one can tell for sure whether or not Kim Il-sung will attack us soon. But there does exist the possibility that he will. Or he may not, which would be the most fortunate thing for us. But still, we must be fully prepared for the worst. That is what national defense is. It is extremely dangerous and irresponsible to think that it is unnecessary to prepare ourselves against an attack because the communists may not attack us. 68

The measures that Park Chung-hee took for improving the security preparedness included, first of all, the national emergency in December 1971.<sup>69</sup> Not much later, he facilitated his "coup in office" and proclaimed the "Fourth Republic" on the basis of the imposed "Yushin Constitution", whose most significant emphasis was on the indirect election to the office of the President. As a result, compared to a period of four years in <sup>the</sup> office of the President who at most could remain for three consecutive terms, the present constitution provided each for a period of six years in office with unlimited terms.<sup>70</sup> Once again, the National Emergency

was declared (which remained till 1979, the year Park got re-elected by a typical electoral system<sup>71</sup>) in the name of "national survival" and "political independence".<sup>72</sup>

Needless to point out here that the aforesaid measures seriously restrained the basic human freedoms. They left little scope for any political party other than Park's to operate. And hence lies the crux of the matter in the sense that the measures taken might pose serious doubts in the minds of the scholars regarding the credibility of the threat perceptions. As the recent history of most of the developing countries shows that behind the perception of such imminent threats from the neighbouring countries lies the sole intention <sup>to</sup> ~~of~~ the rule indefinitely - virtually making oneself a dictator - which under the normal democratic conditions would have been extremely difficult if not impossible to attain. This further sidetracks the main issue such as socio-economic injustice which the general masses confront with. To put it differently, <sup>is</sup> <sub>^</sub> projection of the security threats by a given leader often is a disguise for abdicating the responsibility for the various ills of a given society in a given period and thus consolidates the process of authoritarianism.

Thus the sense of the threat from the North was one of the basic elements that provided the basis for authoritarianism and political suppression in the ROK.



Many Koreans, particularly in the upper reaches of the armed forces, the ultimate source of Park Chung-hee's power, feared that any process aiming at entente in the peninsula would greatly exacerbate existing political differences and would lead ultimately to political disarray in the South. There was sufficient underbrush for political instability in "the maldistribution of income, rural neglect, the pressures of rapid urbanization and large-scale corruption to make these fears understandable".<sup>73</sup>

By 1971, if one assesses objectively, the military balance between the ROK and North Korea did not affect any of them adversely. Otherwise, the ROK would never have pulled out 2/3 divisions from its defenses and sent them to Vietnam. Most analysts<sup>74</sup> thought that the ROK on its own could defend (in 1971) a North Korean attack north of Seoul so long as the US provided logistical and the air support. Opinion was divided on the extent and duration of a ROK defense unaided against a joint North Korean Chinese attack. But, the South Koreans, as we have seen, thought it highly unlikely that a DPRK attack would be supported directly by the Chinese or for that matter the Soviet forces.

However, the military leadership of the ROK throughout the 1970s put maximum emphasis upon the military modernization in the name of "self-reliance".<sup>75</sup> As a result one sees that in 1979 the ROK spent 2,723 million American dollars in

the defense outlay. The year before, i.e. 1978, for instance, it had spent 2,560 million dollars.<sup>76</sup> In 1978, the US CIA projected that "the South would in the future spend about 7 per cent of its GNP on defense. Given the larger size and projected future growth of the Korean economy, the North will have problems matching the South's military expenditures".<sup>77</sup>

This active militarization of the State yielded results as late as 1975 when the ROK gained superiority over or at least equality with ~~the~~ North Korea.<sup>78</sup> The ROK maintained the fifth largest army in the world (in a total population of about 35 million), besides the reserved forces. The South Koreans had more combat experiences than the North Koreans as 300,000 of the former were experienced combat veterans of the Vietnam war. In contrast, the North Korean army had no combat experience since the Korean war. While North Korea might have an advantage in the number of tanks, South Korea had a formidable anti-tank capability.

There were some areas in which the South Koreans did not have much equipment as they would have liked, such as combat aircraft, which the North Koreans possessed more. But if one compared the two air forces in terms of modern high performance air-craft, one found that South Korea had an advantage (the estimate, of course, was made in this particular case in 1975) of 200 to 153.<sup>79</sup>

This was because a larger part of <sup>the</sup> North Korean air force consisted of relatively obsolete aircraft (MiG-15/17/19). South Korea also had a substantial advantage in the ability both to conduct long range offensive attacks deep inside North Korea (deep interdiction) and to provide close support to their troops. South Korean F-4 Phantoms had three times the range and three times the payload of the fighter bombers (SU-7's and the MiG-19's) in the North Korean airforce and the South Korean F-5E's had approximately 50 per cent more range than those of North Korean aircrafts. The SU-7, in North Korea, which seems to have been obtained from the Soviet Union in response to the supplying of F-4s to South Korea by the US are inferior to South Korea's Phantoms in terms of size, avionics and payload.<sup>80</sup> However, because of <sup>the</sup> nominal North Korean advantage in <sup>the</sup> numbers of fighters and South Korean fear of a North Korean surprise attack, the South Koreans built large numbers of aircraft shelters. This greatly diminished the possibility that the NOK air forces could be destroyed on the ground by a North Korean surprise attack against South Korean air bases. As was pointed out in 1973, American Senate Report, "US Air Force Officers in Korea Argue that the Disparity in Fighters and Bombers (Between North and South Korea) is more than compensated for by the shelter programme since shelters and not planes then became target in case of a surprise attack".<sup>81</sup> In short, what was <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> "military

significance was not the total number of aircraft on each side but their relative capabilities and clearly the ROK had the edge.

Besides this, the ROK made substantial effort to improve its ability to defend itself in other areas as well. All these became possible by means of extensive purchases through both cash and credit from the US and other countries.<sup>82</sup> The ROK purchased Harpoon anti-ship missiles and launchers from the US. It also obtained Vulcan anti-aircraft guns from the US and purchased Oerlikon radar directed anti-aircraft guns from the Swiss. It received credits from the British to purchase Vesper fast patrol boats. Finally, the US Army and Air Force promised to stockpile equipment and supplies that would become available to the ROK in time of war. The maintenance of these stockpiles by the US reduced the need for the ROK to maintain its own stockpiles and represented another of the many subsidies to that state.

#### IV(C)

Perhaps, the most important step that the ROK took to build up its defense was the attempt to strengthen its American connection. Despite the realization of the uncertainties from Washington, Seoul did everything to influence the policy makers in the USA. The ROK kept on insisting<sup>on</sup> the fact that it was vulnerable to a North Korean attack and therefore it needed continued American support. Even for the continued American presence, the

ROK deliberately indulged in many provocative military exercises aimed at North Korea. The idea behind these actions was "it would be very difficult for US forces to withdraw from Korea if military conflict was going on."<sup>83</sup>

Park Chung-hee also said: "South Korea in principle believed that the US military presence was still needed and that the withdrawal might be misinterpreted by the North as a sign of weakness on the part of Washington". Despite this, if the US still considered to withdraw its troops from the peninsula then it, Park demanded, must compensate for the troop pull-out with military aid that would strengthen the local armed forces.<sup>84</sup> In this, Park registered a considerable success as we will see in the coming chapters.

Some Korean scholars<sup>85</sup> pointed out that strategically Korea was so important that the emerging Asian Power Balance would be upset if the peninsula was destabilised. Korea was the "dagger pointed at Japan's heart". It was a "bridge", on the other hand, over which Japanese militarism exploded all over the Asian continent, thereby affecting Russia and China. So American strategy of entrusting the safety of the ROK to Japan would be counter-productive. "It is a stark reality that", it was pointed out, "China and Russia would prefer the American presence on the Korean peninsula to the Japanese".

While emphasizing upon the need for stronger commitment from the US, the ROK took a calculated risk of annoying the US so as to impress it regarding the consequences of an unfavourable American response. This it did by planning to develop an independent nuclear capability over the long run.<sup>86</sup>

That the ROK was (is) a signatory to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) did not deter it from pursuing a policy of nuclear development. Seoul launched a trial balloon to test the possible reaction from abroad to its contemplated plan of developing nuclear weapons. President Park said in an interview with the Washington Post on 26 June 1975 that his country "would do anything necessary to ensure its survival including the nuclear weapons.... if the US nuclear umbrella is withdrawn".<sup>87</sup>

This was not an empty threat as the ROK had the capabilities to manufacture them. It already possessed, by 1975, two reactors in operation which would produce between 240 to 340 kilograms of plutonium each year. It was calculated that by 1980 the ROK would have accumulated some 820 to 1000 kilograms of plutonium "sufficient enough to produce 200 nuclear bombs initially, 60 nuclear bombs thereafter, and 88 nuclear bombs annually by the year".<sup>88</sup>

In order to make its potential of nuclear development a reality, Seoul turned to Canada and France for the purchase of a plutonium reprocessing plant (This deal with France was cancelled in January 1976 due to American

pressure, however). But the ROK very soon realised that it had to succumb to US pressure, since the US Congress was expected to cancel the selling of the US arms in relation. Still, it continued to make headway toward nuclear capability. It planned to spread some \$110 million in domestic and foreign currencies during the Fourth Five Year Plan, i.e. 1977 to 1981.<sup>89</sup>

#### V

The analysis made in the preceding sections leads us to conclude that unsure of the Russian and Chinese behaviour, apprehensive of Japanese usefulness, and uncertain of American commitment, the military policy makers of the ROK continued to regard North Korea as the main source of threat. This threat, it is important to note, had nothing to do with the physical security of the State. For, North Korea, three theoretically speaking, remained a part of Korea which Park's regime claimed to represent. So the North Korean threat was always branded as the attempt toward "forcible communization" of the ROK. This assumption had its domestic nexus too - the authoritarian but unpopular polity. However, to meet such a perceptible threat, Seoul embarked upon a programme of intense militarization of the society, particularly by spending huge amount of money on modernization of the defense which included the option of

manufacturing nuclear weapons in order to be "self-reliant". While so doing, every attempt was being made to strengthen as much as possible the American connection by resorting to all possible pressurizing tactics. The dependence upon the US continued to remain the most important pillar of the security policy of the ROK.



Foot Notes

## CHAPTER II

- 1 Michael H.H. Louw, "Introduction to the National Security Concept", in M.H.H. Louw, ed., National Security : A Modern Approach (Institute for Strategic Studies, University of Pretoria, 1978), p.10.
- 2 Michael H.H. Louw, "The Nature of National Security in the Modern Age", n.1, p.19.
- 3 Michael, n.1, p.11.
- 4 Gregory Henderson, Korea : The Politics of Vortex (Harvard University Press, 1968), p.182.
- 5 For details see Ibid., pp.170-80.
- 6 C.I. Eugene Kim, "Asian Military Regimes : Political Systems and States" in Morris Janowitz, Civil-Military Relations : Regional Perspectives (London, 1981), p.34.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 See Carl Berger, The Korea Knot. Revised ed. (Washington, D.C., 1964), pp.208-209. Also see Joungwon A. Kim, Divided Korea : The Politics of Development, 1945-1972 (Harvard University Press, 1975), pp.2224-87. The author vividly describes that soon after the coup, the KCIA was formed, the "purification act" was passed to put the political leaders behind the bars and ban the democratic parties. It was due to the American pressure that elections were held in 1963, that too in accordance with a "unilaterally imposed constitution" framed in 1962. Later the Presidential elections were held in 1967 and by this time Park had achieved a more consolidation of power than the Rhee government before it. This control over a new professional military establishment seemed firm.
- 9 Han Tae-yon, "The Task of Yushin System in Korea", Korea Observer (Seoul), vol.7, no.1, Winter 1976, p.45.
- 10 Kim, n.6.
- 11 For details, see Young Woo Lee, "Birth of the Korean Army, 1945-50", Korea and World Affairs (Seoul), vol.4, no.4, Winter 1980, pp.639-56.

- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Henderson, n.4, p.340.
- 14 Ibid., pp.340-50.
- 15 Ibid., pp.340-50.
- 16 Ibid., p.349.
- 17 Ibid., p.349.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid., pp.354-57.
- 20 Ibid., p.355.
- 21 Ibid., p.357.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Park Chung-hee's (his regime is of direct relevance to us) power base in 1972 (year of inauguration of the Fourth Republic which continued till his death in 1979), for instance, was like this. He had control over the military. His long time confidant, Lee Hu-rak was in-charge of awesome KCIA (Korean Central Intelligence Agency). His control over the DRP, the ruling party, was unquestioned. His cabinet then was headed by J.P. Kim, who was regarded as second to Park in the junta power line-up in 1961. For further details, see C.I. Eugene Kim, "Korea at the Cross Roads : The Birth of the Fourth Republic", Pacific Affairs vol.46, no.2, Summer 1973, pp.218-32.
- 24 Malcom Fleming, "The Post-Vietnam Militarization of the ROK Society", AMPO (Tokyo), vol.7, no.3, July-September 1975, pp.24-25.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Kim Young-jum, "National Security in the 1970s", Korea Journal (Seoul), vol.10, no.5, May 1970, p.9.
- 27 Kim. n.23, pp.218-32.
- 28 Our forthcoming analysis is based upon the views expressed by South Korean intellectuals (Professors) in various journals published from Seoul and the speeches of Park Chung-hee, although more reliance has been made on the former source due to scarcity of the latter, particularly regarding security.

- 29 Park Pong-shik, "The North East Asia Situation and the Security of Korea", Korea Observer, vol.7, no.1, Winter 1976, pp.68-71.
- 30 Peking Review, (Beijing), No.9, 3 March 1972.
- 31 See Park's speech in Journal of Korean Affairs (Seoul), vol.5, no.1, April 1975, p.60.
- 32 It should be noted here that North Korea has been demanding the total withdrawal of the foreign military presence (hence the US) from the peninsula as a step toward the reunification.
- 33 Kim, n.26.
- 34 See Park Chung-hee's press conference on security in Koreana Quarterly (Seoul), vol.14, no.12, Spring-Summer 1972, pp.58-83.
- 35 Park, n.29, p.72.
- 36 Quoted, Ibid.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Ibid., p.73.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid., p.76.
- 41 See Park Jeon-kyu, "International Situation Around Korea in Early 1970s", Koreana Quarterly, vol.12, nos.1&2, Spring-Summer 1970, pp.20-25.
- 42 Kim, n.26, p.9.
- 43 Park, n.41.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Kim, n.26.
- 46 Park's speech, n.34.
- 47 Kim, n.26.
- 48 You Sanguine, "All-out Security and the People's Posture", Korea Observer, vol.6, no.4, Autumn, 1975, p.348.
- 49 Ibid.

- 50 Rew Joung-yola, "Korea's New Foreign Policy : An Appraisal", Koreana Quarterly, vol.15, no.12, Spring-Summer 1973, pp.54-55.
- 51 Quoted, Young Hoon-kang, "Kim Il-sung's Trip to Peking", Journal of Korean Affairs, vol.5, no.1, April 1975, p.48.
- 52 See, New York Times, 29 January 1968, p.1.  
Also see, New York Times, 10 March 1968, p.4.  
It should be noted that this issue was settled peacefully by the USA and North Korea and the former admitted that the ship was seized in North Korea's territorial waters.
- 53 For details, see W.J. Brands, "The US and Korean Peninsula" in W.J. Brands, ed., Two Koreas in East Asian Affairs (New York, 1976), pp.167-207.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 See Chong-sik Lee's speech before the Sub-Committee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 94th Congress, Human Rights in South Korea and the Philippines : Implications for US Policy.
- 56 See Korea Annual (Seoul), 1977 and 1978 issues.
- 57 For details, see Asia Yearbook (Hongkong, 1979), p.22.
- 58 See Park's speech, n.34.
- 59 The Military Balance (London), 1973-74, p.53.
- 60 SIPRI Yearbook(Stockholm), 1980, p.22.
- 61 See Park Joon -kyu, "The Vicissitudes of the International Relations and Unification Policy", Koreana Quarterly, vol.13, no.1, Winter 1971, pp.8-19.
- 62 For details see, Foreign Policy for Peace and Unification (Seoul), p.26.
- 63 See News Release No.152 (Korean Information Service, Embassy of Korea), 29 April 1975.
- 64 Ibid.

- 65 For details see B. C. Koh, "The Battle Without Victors: The Korean Question in the UN General Assembly", Journal of Korean Affairs, vol. 5, no. 4, January 1976, pp. 43-64.
- 66 Ibid., p. 48.
- 67 See News Release, n. 63.
- 68 Park's Speech, n. 34.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 C. J. Eugene Kim, n. 6.
- 71 Asia Yearbook (Hongkong), 1979, p. 220.
- 72 Asia Yearbook (Hongkong), 1978, p. 222.
- 73 Modern Abramowitz, Moving the Ice Glacier: The Two Koreas and the Powers (Adelphi Papers, No. 80, London, 1971), p. 15.
- 74 Ibid., p. 3.
- 75 John A. Wickham, Jr., "The Current State of Security in the ROK", (Eurea Observer), vol. 12, no. 3, Autumn 1981, pp. 247-54.
- 76 SIPRI Yearbook, 1980 (Stockholm), p. 22.
- 77 Choi Chang-yoon, "Korea: Security and Strategic Issues", Asian Survey (Berkeley), vol. 20, no. 11, November 1980, p. 1129. Also see the projected ROK military expenditure as a percentage of projected North Korean GNP in Table 2 at the end. For the detailed comparative military strength of the ROK and the DPRK, see Table 1.
- 78 For details see, "South Korea's Self-Defense Capability", The Defense Monitor (Washington), vol. 5, no. 1, January 1976.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Ralph N. Clough, Deterrence and Defense in Korea: The Role of US Forces (The Brookings Institution, 1976), pp. 12-13.

- 81 Quoted, n.78.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 See the interview with Young W. Lee, former ROK Admiral, The Korean Review (New York), vol.1, no.1, May 1977, p.19.
- 84 See Asia Yearbook (Hongkong), 1978.
- 85 See Pyon-choon Hahn, "Korea and the Emerging Power Balance", Foreign Affairs (New York), vol.50, 1972, pp.338-50.
- 86 Young Wahn Kihl, "Korea's Future : Seoul's Perspective", Asian Survey, vol.17, no.11, November 1977, pp.1064-77.
- 87 Washington Post, 26 June 1975.
- 88 Quoted, Young, n.36, p.1068.
- 89 Ibid.

TABLE 1. China's Military Forces, 1979-1980 (Selected)

Category	Quantity
March 1979	11,580,000
March 1980	11,200,000-11,200,000
500,000-600,000	
200,000 Reserve	
37 Infantry Divisions	
4 Infantry Brigades	
2 Tank Divisions	
5 Tank Regiments	
3 Motorized Infantry Divisions	
4 Performance Brigades	
3 Antiaircraft Artillery Divisions	
10 Antiaircraft Artillery Regiments	
5 Airborne Battalions	
3 SSM Battalion with 1500 Missiles	
20 Artillery Regiments	
2900 Tanks	
20000 Personnel	
15 Submarine	
20 Large Patrol Craft	
18 Fast Attack Craft (with Standard SSM)	
200 Fast Attack Craft	
50 Landing Craft	
47,000 Active Personnel	
300 Combat Aircraft	
120 MiG-21	
840 MiG-15/17/19	
85 Il-28	
20 SU-7	
250 SA-2 SAM	
47,000 Active Personnel	
2,000 Reserve Personnel	
2 Destroyer	
7 Frigate	
8 Fast Attack Craft (with Standard SSM)	
10 Large Patrol Craft	
23 Coastal Patrol Craft	
22 Landing Ship	
20,000 Marine Active Personnel	
1 Marine Division	
2 Marine Brigade	
Air Forces	
32,000 Active Personnel	
254 Combat Aircraft	
37 F-4D/E	
125 F-5E	
50 F-66F	
Para-Military Forces	
40,000 Security Forces and Border Guards	
2,800,000 Civilian Militia	
2,800,000 Homeland Defense Reserve Forces	

SOURCE: ISS, *The Military Balance, 1979-1980*, pp. 68-69

Table 2

Projected ROK Military Expenditure as a Percentage of Projected  
North Korean GNP

Year	ROK GNP (Billion US \$)	ROK Military Expen- diture (7 per cent of GNP)	North Korean GNP	Percentage of the North Korean GNP needed to match ROK
1977	22	1.5	9.5	16
1978	25.5	1.8	10	18
1979	27	1.9	10.5	18
1980	30.5	2.1	13	18

Source: US CIA, Korea : The Economic Race Between the North and the South  
January 1973.



## CHAPTER III

## THE ROK'S SECURITY : THE PERCEPTION OF THE USA

## I

In the 1960s, as we have seen in the introductory chapter of this study, American diplomacy attached special importance to the relationship among its Far Eastern Allies, notably the ROK, Japan and Taiwan. It worked to strengthen these relationships by direct political and military ties. And this was partly responsible for the resumption of relations between the ROK and Japan with the signing of a treaty on the fundamentals of relations and a number of agreements in June 1965.

Definite changes, however, in American policy emerged in the late 1960s. President Richard Nixon put forward a foreign policy concept which aimed at adapting the US world perception to the changed global situation. The "Nixon Doctrine", as this concept came to be called, marked a new stage in the US policy in Asia and with respect to the ROK in particular. It should be emphasized that the main goals of this "doctrine" (with various modifications) laid the basis of the political course pursued subsequently by the Ford and Carter Administrations.

Before describing the "doctrine", the circumstances in which it was enunciated should be pointed out. In early 1968, the US had got itself intensely involved in Indo-China conflict. This proved to be a disaster for the policy makers in Washington in the sense that American involvement proved

not only to be a colossal loss in both human and material terms, but also it created a tremendous social stir in the domestic policy of the US itself. Many Americans pressurised the government to "bring the boys (soldiers deployed abroad) home". The "Nixon Doctrine" was, in fact, the response to the public pressures. This demand for the reduction of American efforts in the conflict-prone areas of the world was possible in any of the following ways.<sup>1</sup>

First, the US should be willing to accept losses in what was still seen as a struggle with the communists. But the Nixon Administration could never accept such defects.

Secondly, the allies of the US should ~~and would~~ do more for their own defense without depending upon the US at all. But this was not a promising approach in the Asian context as these allies were not capable of doing so.

Thirdly, there should be a return to some version of the doctrine of massive retaliation. But this made no sense in the strategic environment of the late sixties.

Fourthly, the "threats" from the USSR and the PRC "could be made less". This possibility offered the way out, partly by a lowered estimate that both the PRC and the USSR lacked the required abilities to gain influence in the Third World (especially after the departure of

Sukarno in Indonesia and Nasser in Egypt), and partly by the US recognition that the PRC was less inclined toward the use of military force than had previously been thought.<sup>2</sup>

In concrete terms, this meant that the US, by the end of sixties, was considering seriously the idea that the best way to live in peace was to let the opponents live in peace. This perhaps was in President Nixon's mind when he said: "I think it will be safer world and better world if we have a strong healthy US, Europe, the Soviet Union, China and Japan, each balancing the other, not playing one against the other, an even balance".<sup>3</sup> Thus, the US should not do anything that might hurt its opponents and it would expect the opponents to behave likewise.

It is against this background that we should read the "Nixon doctrine". The doctrine was enunciated by President Nixon in his informal remarks with newsmen at Guam on 25 July, 1969.<sup>4</sup> He said (when asked about the US military relationship in Asia):

I believe the time has come when the US, in our relations with all of our Asian friends, be quite emphatic on two points: One, that we will keep our treaty commitments...., but two, that as far as the problems of military defense, except for the threat of a major power involving nuclear weapons, that the US is going to encourage and has a right except that this problem will be increasingly handled by, and

the responsibility for it taken by, the Asian nations themselves. 5

To remove the confusion regarding what he said above, the President in a nation-wide telecast on 3 November, 1969 said:

I laid down in Guam three principles as guidelines for future American policy toward Asia: First, the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments. Second, we shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security. Third, in cases involving other types of aggression, we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the man-power for its defense. 6

The implications of the doctrine (in security terms) were made further clear by the Defense Report of M.R. Laird, the then Secretary of Defense in 1972. It said:

In defense planning the strategy of Realistic Deterrence emphasizes our need to plan for optimum use of all military and related resources available to meet the requirements of Free World Security. These Free World military and related resources which we call 'Total Force' - include both active and reserve components of the US, those of our allies, and the additional military capabilities of our allies and friends that will be made available through local efforts or through provision of appropriate security assistance programmes. 7

This, it was pointed out, was in continuity with the line advocated by President Nixon that "in our (US) relations with all countries we (US) proceed to give effect to our (US) new policy of insisting that we have neither the prescriptions nor the resources for the solutions of the problems in which ours is not the prime national interest. It is coming to be widely understood that we are in the earnest when we say that it is for others to formulate solutions to these problems, and that our contribution should be viewed as a supplement to the application of major resources from those primarily at interest".<sup>8</sup>

Viewing all this, the report identified two types of conflict in the Third World. One termed "theatre conflict" would involve Soviet or Chinese attacks on Third World countries. Turkey, Greece, South Korea, Taiwan and South East Asia stood as the possible targets. Under the Nixon doctrine, according to the Report, the US would presumably remain willing to play a major role in determining that type of conflict.<sup>9</sup>

The second form of Third World hostilities, termed "sub-theatre conflict" raised more complex questions, the Report said. The Nixon doctrine identified two variants of sub-theatre conflict. The first involved attack by countries such as North Korea and North Vietnam on US allies such as South Korea and South Vietnam, Cambodia,

Laos and Thailand. In these instances, the Nixon Doctrine would favour the attacked country's defending itself without the aid of US combat forces but would not preclude the involvement of American forces under special circumstances. The second consisted of insurrections against the established governments. In that case the government involved would clearly be expected to deal with the insurgency on its own, with only material help from the US.<sup>10</sup>

Another but significant aspect of American policy which may be taken note of is the policy of emphasizing the need for "Asian Regionalism".<sup>11</sup> Speaking on the subject, Marshall Green, the then Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, said on 20 October 1969:

While the US interests in the area remain essentially the same and our commitments will be honoured, we recognize that there is change in the mood of the American people. They are cautious about undertaking new commitments. They are becoming somewhat impatient with carrying what many consider to be a disproportionate share of burden of military security and economic assistance abroad. They are asking more and more frequently what other countries are doing to help themselves and each other.... I should close with a special word on Japan .... Japan is now the third most economic entity today. But these great achievements carry with them great responsibilities. And the world is watching to see the role which Japan will henceforth play in the development and security of Asia.<sup>12</sup>

Thus the Nixon doctrine maintained all the defense commitments that the US assumed early in the cold war and insisted that the armed forces of the US and its allies remain strong. It has therefore been criticized, with some justification, "for over-emphasizing the importance of military force and continuing the old containment policy in a new guise".<sup>13</sup> But the doctrine went beyond containment in its effort to diminish the risk of war and to create, as already pointed out in the beginning, a network of constructive relationships with the adversary states. The traumatic experiences of the Vietnam War made it imperative to make a re-assessment of the containment policy. The environment for the change became further conducive due to the Sino-Soviet split and its far-reaching impact. This objectively favoured the anti-communist governments like the ROK. As a result, it was contemplated that the containment policy could be sustained even without the intervention of the US forces. This seemed to be the rationale that prompted President Nixon to say that "while we will maintain our interests in Asia and the commitments that flow from them, the changes taking place in that region enable us to change the character of our involvement".<sup>14</sup>

The Asian policy based on the principles of Nixon doctrine, now we can say, presupposed, in substance, a new approach to the traditional adversaries in general

and China in particular, on the one hand; and on the other, loyalty to US allies, which in the far eastern context would include South Korea, Japan and Taiwan. This policy proclaimed unity of America's Asian allies to be a primary objective and gave Japan the main role in attaining it. Japan was expected to carry out the American objectives; that is, to rely on Japan's potential in order to share the political "responsibility" and the burden of military expenditures in the Far East.

Secondly, a careful reading of Nixon Doctrine makes one realize the special point of the "growing independent role" of the allies thereby meaning that otherwise they would not learn to look after themselves. Nixon pointed out that a combination of the principle of replacing US military strength by the forces of its allies and the US readiness to come to their aid in case of a nuclear threat, and its loyalty to its treaty commitments, was the key to an understanding of the ideas by which the US intended to preserve its important role in Asia while withdrawing its troops from Vietnam and elsewhere.<sup>15</sup>

To put it differently, in setting up a military-political alliance in Asia (especially in the Pacific area<sup>16</sup>), American policy makers counted on achieving a "regional balance of power". They prepared the ground to prevent the predominance in Asia of a strong rival who might threaten American global interests. Nixon wanted to preserve multi-state system to control over



Various parts of the region by means of the "nuclear umbrella" and the bilateral defense treaties with its allies. As unity among the East Asian allies would grow, the US, it was intended, would relax the "rigidity" of its bilateral defense treaties. It, then, would assume the role of a mediator in Asia in future. Therefore, Nixon repeatedly spoke of the need for Asians to settle their problems and conflicts themselves, promising aid if a great power threatened to attack them using nuclear weapons".<sup>17</sup>

But this "doctrine" aroused dissatisfaction among the ROK and Taiwan, the smaller Far Eastern allies of the US. Japan's military weakness outside the US-Japanese alliance was not the only factor obvious to them. They, especially, some Korean scholars, associated Japanese "independence" in Asian affairs with the fairly recent Japanese occupation, with the demagogic slogans of the "Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere" with Japan's role as the "elder" brother and so on. This suspicion of Seoul (Taipei too) received a new impetus in the late 1960s when the Japanese monopolies began intensive economic penetration into their traditional "spheres of influence", although both the ROK and Taiwan were interested, to a definite degree, in broad economic contacts with Japan.<sup>18</sup>

Notwithstanding the major antagonisms among America's far eastern allies, owing to political, economic and also historical factors, American diplomacy succeeded, in the

beginning, in taking an important step toward entrusting "special responsibility" on Japan for the South Korean and Taiwan regimes. The communique issued after the talks between Japan's Premier Sato and President Nixon on 19-21 November 1969, said that the security of the Korean Republic was inseparable from the security of Japan and the security in the region of Taiwan was also an exceptionally important factor <sup>^</sup>for the security of Japan.<sup>19</sup> Actually, this appeared to be a commitment by the Japanese government <sup>as</sup> to be an ally of the US in supporting South Korean and Taiwan regimes. However, there was a difference between the Japanese responsibility toward the ROK and its duty for Taiwan. This became, subsequently, obvious when the Japanese leaders explained that if war broke out in the Korean peninsula, Japan was obliged immediately to back up any US military actions taken from Japan, even before the UN decided whether the war in Korea was an act of aggression or not, while in the event of fighting in the Taiwan Strait, Japan could not but be greatly disturbed by the position of that state which it recognised.<sup>20</sup>

The reaction of Seoul to the outcome of the meeting between Nixon and Sato was positive on the whole. It attempted to go farther by urging the Japanese government to strengthen the system of military cooperation between Japan and the ROK. This call was made in a document

headed: "Problems of Security of the Korean Republic in the 1970s",<sup>21</sup> which was sent to Tokyo. This reflected the desire of the ROK to draw Japan into active work to build up a "tripartite defense structure" (The US-Japan-ROK) as the basis of a future regional military-political bloc.<sup>22</sup> (Japan took an evasive stand on this)

These efforts to draw Japan into the orbit of American policy went hand in hand with other important undertakings under the Nixon doctrine. They included a search for channels for contact with Peking (Beijing) and the reduction of American military presence from the area including the ROK. It should be noted here that Beijing had strongly condemned the Sato-Nixon communique by branding it "US imperialism's act of reviving Japanese militarism", so that the Japanese militarist forces could play a "major role" in Nixon's "new Asian policy" of "using Asians to fight Asians".<sup>23</sup> The same attitude was again manifested when Chinese Premier Chou Enlai visited Pyongyang in April 1970.<sup>24</sup>

In October 1969 reports seeped through to the press that the US was considering the withdrawal of one division of its troops from the ROK, not linking up their presence with the presence of 40,000 South Korean troops in Vietnam.<sup>25</sup> On 6 July 1970, the US Ambassador in Seoul officially informed the ROK of his government's intention to reduce the number of troops in that country

by 20,000 men.<sup>26</sup> This decision was the beginning of an important new stage in Washington's relations with its far eastern allies. While continuing to declare its commitment to the treaties with its allies, the US began to reduce its armed forces from Asia. It was now a question, for the first time, of withdrawing troops that were not involved in the Vietnam war, thereby affecting Asian allies of the US.<sup>27</sup>

The White House decision evoked open and bitter opposition in Seoul. Park Chung-hee regime, as we saw in the previous chapter, began to prepare public opinion for the idea that American troops could not remain in Korea for ever, and hence the State must take the appropriate measures.

There in the USA, criticisms started coming against the administration. It is more important to note that the American intelligentsia was broadly divided into two groups, one supporting the "reduction" (even "withdrawal") in the name of "American disengagement", and the other pointing out the dangerous implications of such a policy and hence rejecting it. This we will see in details when we go to the "Carter period" because it is during the Presidency of Jimmy Carter that such controversy gathered the maximum momentum. What should be stressed here is the fact that the desirability of the American presence in the ROK was not questioned all of a sudden when Carter became President. Right from

the time of President Nixon, the talks about the "disengagement" had been there.

However, President Nixon did not reverse his decision. The plan of the withdrawal of the ground troops was put through in October 1970, and it soon became known that the US was recalling the seventh division that guarded on 18-mile sector of the demilitarized zone.<sup>28</sup> Thus, almost the entire 155-mile armistice line between the two parts of Korea was now under the control of the ROK army. This was obviously the main idea of the troop reduction in the ROK since the remaining American troops were stationed in the rear and would not go into action automatically in the event of minor clashes.<sup>29</sup>

At the same time, the stormy South Korean reaction and Seoul's attempt to put pressure on the US by threatening to withdraw its troops from Vietnam evidently had some effect on Washington. At the beginning of 1971, it was learnt that President Nixon had instructed the Defense Department to postpone indefinitely the plans for further troops reduction due to the pleading of the State Department that a speedy second round of reductions might create serious political problems in the ROK where Presidential and Parliamentary elections were scheduled to be held in the Spring of 1971.<sup>30</sup> The question of further reduction was not raised again until the US presidential election campaign of 1976.

The second notable aspect of American policy toward the ROK during the Nixon Administration was the American endeavour aiming at creating a peaceful atmosphere in the peninsula through diplomatic means. This was followed by President Ford also. In concrete terms, this meant that the South Korean leaders should define spheres in which South and North Korea could begin a dialogue. Although the South Korean leaders had spoken of "the inevitability of a future dialogue with the North",<sup>31</sup> there was no doubt that it was the American actions (normalisation of the relations with the PRC, the reduction of troops, policy of detente which meant the peaceful co-existence between the socialist and capitalist nations) and advice, besides the rise in popularity of Kim Dae-jang, the main opposition leader of the ROK, as was manifested in 1971 presidential election, which prompted the ROK to do so. This we have already seen in the previous chapter. We also saw its fecundity as it resulted in a series of North-South dialogues, although in concrete terms they did not achieve much. But they were important for the fact that henceforward both the parts of the peninsula launched intensified diplomatic offensives" against each other instead of emphasizing upon the military resource. To score the diplomatic victory, as we saw in the last chapter, on 23 June, Park Chung-hee

unexpectedly suggested that both parts of Korea should become members of the United Nations and other international organizations.

This tactic of Seoul had the American backing. In the same month (June), the US Secretary of State arrived in Seoul for talks and described Park Chung-hee's statement as promising.<sup>32</sup> All this indicated that the Nixon Administration showed <sup>a</sup>the propensity toward the concept of "two Koreas".

Thus on the whole, the US policy toward the ROK during Nixon's term of office could be described as a position of continued full support (in accordance with the defense treaty) with a simultaneous desire, and this was the change, to encourage Japanese involvement in the ROK's security and to exert pressure on Seoul to be more flexible in its relations with the DPRK.

## II

The Watergate scandal led to the end of Nixon's presidency but not the end of most of the principles underlying the USA's new Far Eastern policy. Gerald Ford, the Vice-President under Richard Nixon, assumed the Presidency on 9 August 1974. During his period, some alterations, as we will see now, were made; but they did not tantamount to a repudiation of the course set up by President Nixon. These were due to the emerging political realities that the new Administration faced.

The crushing defeat suffered by the US (in Indo-China) resulted in an important change in the emphasis

rather than the substance of the US Asian policy. In late 1974, when the communist victory in Vietnam seemed imminent, Ford had paid a visit to the ROK. There he told the South Korean President: "I am here, Mr President, to reaffirm our friendship and to give it new life and meaning. Nothing binds nations together closer than to have fought side by side for the same cause. Two times we have stood together here as well as in Vietnam, to preserve the peace, to preserve the stability of Asia and the world. We can never forget this".<sup>33</sup>

On 1 May 1975, that is, the day after the fall of Saigon, James Schlesinger, the US Defense Secretary, declared that Western Europe and South Korea were the front defense zone after the withdrawal from Vietnam. On 16 May 1975, Henry Kissinger, the Secretary of State, also said: "We believe that the defense of Korea and the security of Korea is important for the security of the whole Northeast Pacific .... and it is extremely important for our relationship with Japan."<sup>34</sup>

Still another important aspect of relations between the US and the ROK became known in the same period when the Congress was examining the military expenditures under the 1976 budget, it was officially announced, for the first time, that the US had stationed in South Korea 1,000 units of tactical nuclear weapons and 54 aircraft for their delivery, and that parts of



the nuclear warheads were situated close to the demarcation line".<sup>35</sup> A few days later, President Ford reaffirmed this and said, in response to a question asking whether he would authorise the use of nuclear weapons to stop a North Korean attack on South Korea, "I am saying we have them and they will be used in our national interest".<sup>36</sup> Both the comments were in stark contrast to the long standing official (American) policy of refusing to comment on the presence of nuclear weapons in Asia.<sup>37</sup>

The main features of the US policy in the Far East were clearly outlined by Philip Habib, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs in his statement before the 94th Congress (1974-75). They were as follows:<sup>38</sup>

A. Political and Strategic

1. Support for the sovereignty and independence of the non-communist nations in the area (North East Asia).
2. Maintain an equilibrium in the area so as to avoid hegemony by any major power.
3. Work to reduce tensions and to reduce the likelihood of violent confrontations between nations in the area.
4. Maintain US commitment in the region, although these are now more modest than in the past.

In regard to Korea, Habib said:<sup>39</sup>

- "1. Continued tension is likely to remain for a long time as North seeks reunification on its terms alone.
2. North is undertaking a major effort to isolate the South diplomatically, as evidenced in its UN resolution.

3. The US must maintain a firm posture under our Mutual Defense Treaty commitment.
4. The US will support the North-South dialogue which is presently at an impasse".

In this report to the Congress, Habib also stated that the Administration wanted the Congress to help the ROK in its efforts toward the modernisation of the defense.<sup>40</sup>

Mr Solarz, a Congress-man gave a suggestion to the administration which is being reproduced below for its high importance:

As you know (addressed to Habib) the US second division is deployed north of Seoul. If a surprise attack took place, there is real possibility of our ground forces now deployed North of Seoul would unavoidably be involved in hostilities as that is the traditional invasion route. This will be perhaps, against our wishes, an American involvement .... (So) Why do we not redeploy the forces we have north of Seoul, south of Seoul? We could thereby keep our troops in South Korea.... continuing the deterrent value of our military presence but not risking our automatic involvement, if a surprise attack should take place. 41

Habib replied:

Two reasons. First, the deterrent is there to make sure that deterrent is credible. Secondly, in order to move the division it would require a very large outlay of funds.... that people talk in terms of a half a billion of dollars in terms of facilities.... in addition you have to restructure your defense posture substantially at that time and I would say that like you, we do not have any indication at this time that an attack is imminent. One of the reasons I think is because the second division happens to be there. 42

Important to note here is the fact that Habib clearly differentiated the American soldiers deployed in the DMZ (de-militarized zone) from the troops stationed north of Seoul. While answering a question, he said: "The troops that are up on the line (DMZ) are deployed under an entirely different purpose. They are deployed within the terms of the armistice agreement and indeed are the troops that deal with the armistice area itself, the Panmunjom area. This is what they are there. Up until 1971 we actually had a division deployed on the line. That division was withdrawn and put into reserve and no division was put on the line... The troops (not division)...(that) .... are actually on the line, are there not in connection basically with the defense; they are there in connection with the armistice agreement and its enforcement. Under the armistice agreement our people are charged jointly with the security of that particular area".<sup>43</sup>

The above "Hearing" that we saw in details makes one point unmistakably clear. That is, the ROK and its security were regarded by Ford Administration to be important for the stability in North East Asia, the disturbance of which otherwise would <sup>be</sup> ~~go~~ contrary to the American interest. This emphasis which Ford, unlike Nixon, gave was, as was argued, by many, due to the "Japanese factor". This, however, does not mean that it was "the" factor.

In the early 1970s, though relations with Seoul continued to maintain priority, Tokyo made significant changes in its North Korean posture. Mainly responsible for this was the positive response of a significant section of the LDP (the ruling party of Japan) and the business community including both large and medium business enterprises to the North Korean invitation.<sup>44</sup> All this was in the environment of strained relationship between both the countries due to Kim Dae-jung incident in 1973 (the famous Korean opposition leader was kidnapped from a hotel in Tokyo by the Korean Central Intelligence Agency).

But the pro-Seoul elements in the LDP, so far lying low, exploited the alleged North Korean plot of killing Park which resulted in the assassination of his wife, discovery of the underground tunnels supposedly built by the North Koreans and the axe-slaying of the American soldiers. So in 1974 Miazawa Kiichi, the Japanese Foreign Minister said:

In past year or so, there have been several unhappy developments in Japanese-ROK relations, but the importance of close Japanese-ROK relations in our foreign policy has not diminished at all.... Our government also intends to make greater efforts to improve friendly relations with the Republic of Korea. 45

Especially after the communist victory in Indo-China, South Korea's importance to Japan as a psychological and military buffer against communism loomed large.

To face this contingency as well as its overall defense posture in the wake of Vietnam, Tokyo substantially strengthened its security ties with the US in an unprecedented <sup>su</sup>swart of meetings in 1975. They included Miazawa's journey to Washington in May, Premier Miki's visit in August, Schlessinger's trip to Japan and the ROK in September, all symbolically capped by Emperor Hiroshita's historic visit to the US in October.<sup>46</sup>

For our purpose let us confine ourselves to only two meetings (Japan-US) which highlighted the importance of the ROK's security. First was the visit of Miki to the USA in August 1975. Reflecting the LDP's dominant "pro-Seoul" view, Miki argued that "the security of the ROK, which in turn is necessary for peace and security in East Asia including Japan".<sup>47</sup> Urging Ford to maintain current American policy toward Seoul so that "delicate equilibrium" in Korea would not be disturbed, he said, "We trust there will be no sudden change in the US policy".<sup>48</sup>

Similarly, the American and Japanese security talks during Schlessinger's visit set the stage for the closer security cooperation of which the ROK was regarded the key. Acting on the Self-Defense Agency's (Japan) judgement that North Korea posed a threat to South Korea and that "the possibility of limited military conflicts in Korea has increased in the post-Vietnam period", Japan formally requested the US to see that "American troops in South Korea

be maintained on a long-term basis". Japan also reassured the USA of "continued use of their bases" in Japan. With regard to "prior consultation" in military operations launched from US bases in it, Japan indicated that in actual crises threatening ROK's security, it would not quibble in saying yes".<sup>49</sup>

This Japanese pressure played an extremely important role in Ford's thinking about the ROK. Henry Kissinger, the Secretary of State admitted it while saying "if we abandon (the ROK), it would have drastic consequences in Japan and over all Asia because it would be interpreted as our final withdrawal from Asia and our final withdrawal from our whole post-war foreign policy".<sup>50</sup>

Thus the Ford Administration pursued a policy toward the ROK which could be viewed as "part of a comprehensive US readjustment throughout Asia to an offshore defensive posture".<sup>51</sup> Even the famous "Pacific Doctrine"<sup>52</sup> of Ford clearly reflected this view. Ford, among other things, said that American strength was basic to the stability in the Pacific, that partnership with Japan was the pillar of American policy, that American interest in Asia depended upon the resolution of the outstanding conflicts which included the Korean problem and that the solution of the Korean problem must take into account the peace and security of the peninsula and hence of the ROK to which the US would continue to be committed.<sup>53</sup>

Summing up Gerald Ford's brief presidency, we may say that the US had a defensive reaction to the defeat that it suffered in Indo-China. American strategic interests in the Asian Pacific region shifted to North East Asia. On the military track, the initial phase of the policy required a strong Japan and a strong ROK. In the case of the latter, the US promised all sorts of assistance for the military modernisation; and as long as the process of modernisation was not over, the US maintained its steadfast commitment in order to defeat the anticipated adventurism by the North Koreans. Hence, there was the "saber-rattling" in mid-1975 by American officials (mainly Schlessinger) on the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Korea.

However, all this did not mean, as we have emphasised somewhere else, that Ford deviated from the path <sup>shown</sup> ~~set up~~ by Nixon. For, <sup>the</sup> "Nixon doctrine" did not mean, in concrete terms, the withdrawal from Asia. It, in fact, aimed at creating an environment in which the USA could remain in Asia effectively. Ford, like Nixon, was thinking of withdrawing American ground troops from the ROK.<sup>54</sup> But he, unlike Nixon, never emphasised upon it. The mechanism of his policy of withdrawal was "the transfer to the South Korean government, the military ability to contain the existing tension (in the peninsula)".<sup>55</sup> This had been made quite clear by the Admiral Noel Gayler in his report to the 94th Congress.

He said:

(know)  
 I do not think . . . . when we can safely withdraw. I think we have to assess the situation as it exists when the time comes, when we think that the South Korean situation is secure so that an aggression from the North would require a grave miscalculation. Then and only then, I think we should withdraw. I think we should make it conditional on that situation rather than conditional on a fixed number of years, or the execution and completion of any specific programme. 56

Likewise, in continuity with Nixon's policy, Ford Administration kept open the option of political efforts toward the Korean question. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, addressing the UN in September 1975, proposed the conditional ~~de~~termination of the UN command; multi-lateral negotiations among South Korea, North Korea, the US and "other members of the Security Council" to find out new ways to preserve the armistice agreement; and full membership for the Korean government in the UN without prejudice to their eventual unification". 57

### III(A)

It is the presidency of Jimmy Carter that created much of an uproar as far as the relations between the ROK and the US, particularly the security aspects, were concerned. Before we attempt to discuss it at length, it will be better to reflect on the then prevailing opposing views regarding America's "Korea policy". This is important in the sense that Carter, being a Presidential candidate, would not have been indifferent to all this.



As we have pointed out earlier, the presence of American troops in the ROK and the resultant security commitment had stirred a strong public controversy in the US toward the last phase of the American involvement in Vietnam. Persons advocating the "change" in the policy had varied reasons to base their logic on; but we can, for our convenience, put them in an overall framework.

To begin with, it was pointed out that the American commitment to the ROK was meant to contain <sup>the</sup> Soviet Union and China (PRC). But, this containment policy of the US has lost much of its vigour now. The "dominant" theory has been made defunct, it was argued, by its propounders themselves.<sup>58</sup> For, Sino-American relations considerably improved in the seventies. Similarly, the rivalry with the USSR was no longer the primary pre-occupation of the USA. Even if the USSR was the main danger, China was taking care of that, at least in Asia. Therefore, it was emphasised that there was no need for active involvement in the ROK.

Further, the emphasis was laid upon American debacle in Indo-China. For, this debacle (the advocates of "disengagement" in Korea thought) was the result of the then prevailing American foreign policy toward Asia. The Americans, they argued,<sup>59</sup> must keep themselves aloof from the Asian conflict. This argument got strengthened as the sentiment of "bringing the boys home" prevailed strongly in the minds of the American public.

One scholar went even up to the extent of arguing that strictly from the security point of view, America's natural defense line was not on the land half-way up to the Korean peninsula, but in Korean strait, where it could be easily maintained by the US overwhelming naval power in the Western Pacific. South Korea, in this sense, he concluded, was a strategic liability, not an asset.<sup>60</sup>

The second category of scholars pointed out that the American withdrawal from the peninsula could not vitally affect the stability of the region. In the present circumstances, it was pointed out, there was no probability of an attack from the North on the South. "With the Sino-Soviet dispute growing in intensity, Pyongyang found itself caught in the cross-fire of its two communist-near neighbours and gradually recognised that it could no longer count on a massive outside support in any new military conflict with the South. Later, as both Koreas began to confront a resurgent Japan, Pyongyang saw (hence would realise) that a policy of indefinite confrontation with the South would only harden the Seoul-Tokyo axis...."<sup>61</sup> Moreover the strains imposed by a policy of austere economic nationalism, which resulted in the curbs in the foreign aids from the fellow socialist countries,<sup>62</sup> appeared to have contributed a shift, as far as North Korea was concerned, "from a militant unification posture to a softer line".

Given the fact that neither the Soviet Union nor China will come to its help if North Korea, for the sake of argument, attempts to attack the South, then the advocates of the withdrawal thought South Korea still would be in a position to defend itself. Not only did it have twice the population of its adversary and larger armed forces in terms of manpower, "but her gross national product had been growing twice as fast as that of North Korea in the 1965-75 period".<sup>63</sup> This trend was expected to continue. As a result, there was a growing conviction among those critics that Seoul was capable of maintaining a reasonable defense posture vis-a-vis the North without the presence of American ground combat troops.

Even if the ROK was not capable of defending itself and it, as a result, turned communist under Kim Il-sung, as the proponents of this hypothesis said,<sup>64</sup> the US would lose little. The American anxiety, it was pointed out, rested upon the apparent belief that the North was bound to act as a creature of either <sup>the</sup> Soviet Union or China and that Seoul and Pyongyang could establish a unified Korean identity under the auspices of the major powers.<sup>65</sup> Thus the need for an agreement stabilizing the relationship of the North and South to the satisfaction of Moscow, Beijing, Tokyo and Washington was stressed. Otherwise, it was feared, a withdrawal could result in "a vacuum of influence".<sup>66</sup> But this

assumption was demolished on the ground that the great military powers in the recent years have proved incapable of controlling the less powerful countries, as was demonstrated in the case of Vietnam. So a unified communist Korea would even be more able and insistent than the present North Korean regime on maintaining its independence of both China and the USSR.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, it is the threat from American intervention that makes, another critic pointed out, North Korea's relations with the USSR and China a critical factor.<sup>68</sup>

The third category of scholars argued for the American withdrawal on a "moralistic line" because of the following two reasons. The US is the citadel of democracy. It, therefore, should support only those countries which respect democracy. In a democratic country there were institutional checks against the violation of human rights. But South Korean regime has become authoritarian and violated the basic human rights which included "the torture of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; prolonged detention without charges; or other flagrant denials of the right to life, liberty and security of the person".<sup>69</sup> President Park declared martial law in 1972 and it became more or less a permanent fixture in the ROK's polity. The previous constitution was suspended and in its place the "Yushin" constitution was enforced to enable Park to continue in office indefinitely. This constitution has seriously restricted the civil rights and liberties in South Korea.

Therefore, these critics pointed out that American backing would not help the ROK as far as the fear of a North Korean attack was concerned. For, so long as Seoul regime had the loyalty of its people, it would be extremely foolhardy for the North to attempt to topple the South with its own limited power, even if the South lacked American military support. What South, thus, had to fear from the North was not open aggression but internal subversion which only could be tackled if there was no public discontent.

Secondly, it was found that some prominent Koreans were exerting their influence through bribery in the policy (toward Korea), making process of the US. For instance, in the famous "Korea Gate Scandal",<sup>70</sup> it was discovered how Park Tung-sun, a South Korean rice dealer was influencing the American policy makers. This view was further strengthened when Kim Hyung-uk, former Director of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency and a self-imposed exile, revealed it to the Americans. The Congress wanted to testify it from Park Tung-sun himself who now was in Seoul. But exonerating himself from all the charges, Park Tung-sun refused to testify before the Congress. So when the Congress requested the Seoul government to send him to Washington, the latter expressed its inability to do so. Thus, anti-Korean feeling was intensified in the US and many questioned the recalcitrant behaviour of a State for which the US had done so much.

The aforesaid point is important in the sense that it made the environment, as far as the American public was concerned, conducive <sup>to</sup> ~~for~~ those who were demanding the American disengagement. It is against this background that the debate on the Korean issue in the Presidential election campaign (1976) should be viewed. Carter kept in mind the importance of the war veterans and their dependents (Vietnam war) who certainly disliked the American involvement in another Asian war and the investigations concerning Korea which, if proved, would create difficulties for any President of the US.<sup>71</sup>

Carter's predilections toward the respect for human rights was another factor that conditioned his attitude toward the ROK. On the other hand, and this is a notable aspect, Carter's denunciation of the Park regime might have been a calculated <sup>move</sup> ~~plot~~ to win over the support of American church leaders who were quite concerned about the movements of their fellow church leaders there in the ROK. It should be remembered that many South Korean church leaders had formed a Council of Human Rights Movement whose aim, among others, was the restoration of constitutional guarantees in the ROK.<sup>72</sup>

On 23 June 1976, while campaigning, Carter declared: "It will be possible to withdraw our ground troops from South Korea .... It should be made clear to the South Korean government that its internal oppression is repugnant to our people and undermines our support for our commitment there".<sup>73</sup>

After being elected, Carter in 1977 attempted to keep his election pledges. He announced the removal of American troops from South Korea in phases.<sup>74</sup> Over a gradual five years period, it was decided, most of the over 42,000 American soldiers would be recalled along with automatic tactical weapons (nuclear). Soon after the PRM 13 (Presidential Review Memorandum), the administration's basic policy document on the withdrawal plan, incorporated Carter's view and "stressed that removal of US ground forces, especially the Second Infantry Division, located just off the DMZ, would remove the "trip-wire" of automatic American involvement in ground combat if North Korea attacked". It also stated that "if US air and naval forces became directly engaged in resisting a North Korean invasion, they would be reinforced only with weapons and ammunitions and not with ground troops". A similar view was expressed earlier in PRM-10, an administration assessment of US global strategy, which stated that termination of a land-based military pressure in Asia would provide the US with "flexibility to determine at the time whether it should or should not get involved in a local war".<sup>75</sup>

To explain Carter's policy, two Presidential envoys, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Philip Habib and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General George Brown, visited Seoul from 24 to 26 May 1977.<sup>76</sup>

The same spirit was also reflected in the two-day meeting at Seoul of the annual Security Consultative Conference on Korea. This meeting was attended by US Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown. The ROK, while agreeing to the principle of withdrawal (this we have already seen in the previous chapter), bargained hard for "compensatory measures prior to withdrawal".

As a result, <sup>^</sup>the joint communique of 26 July, we find the following things:<sup>77</sup>

First, it was agreed that the first batch of 6,000 American ground troops would leave Korea by the end of 1978. The remaining ground forces will be withdrawn over a period of five years.

Secondly, the US would render Korea prompt and effective military support in accordance with the Korea-US Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954 in case of a contingency in Korea.

Thirdly, the Headquarters of Second US division and two US brigades would remain in Korea until the completion of the planned withdrawal of US ground forces from Korea.

Fourthly, even after the planned withdrawal of US ground troops from Korea, US naval and intelligence units, communication elements and logistic personnel would continue to remain there.

Fifthly, the military equipment in the possession of the second US division would be turned over to the Korean armed forces free of charge.



Sixthly, extreme American foreign military sales credits will be provided to Korea to enhance its defense capability.

### III(B)

In the above section we reproduced the speech of Carter which clearly emphasized (in the year 1976) that American commitment to the ROK was dependent upon the observance of the basic human rights there. But in June 1978, i.e. nearly two years after Carter gave a speech which just did not point out <sup>the above</sup> any condition<sup>s</sup>. He said:

Peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and in the North East Asia are vital to our national interest. The nation is fully determined to maintain its commitment to the Republic of Korea .... In announcing my decision to withdraw our ground combat forces from Korea over a 4-5 year period, I stressed that it was essential to improve South Korean defense forces so as to confidently maintain an adequate military balance on the peninsula. I also announced that we will take other measures to maintain the balance, including our air forces in Korea in October of this year. I also asked the Congress to approve a program to help strengthen South Korean military capabilities particularly legislation to authorize the transfer to South Korea of a significant portion of the equipment of our departing ground combat forces. 78

Similarly, in a letter to Senate majority leader, Robert Byrd and House Speaker Thomas O. Neil, dated 20 July 1978, President Carter stated: "Should circumstances affecting the balance change significantly, we will assess these changes in close consultations with the Congress, the Republic of Korea and other Asian allies. Our plans will be adjusted if the developments so warrant".<sup>79</sup> In the same letter he pointed out that

withdrawal should not "follow a rigid time-table not subject to modification in the light of changing circumstances".

On 9 February 1979, Carter declared that "right now we are holding in abeyance any further reduction in the US ground combat troops levels from South Korea until we can assess the new intelligence data on the build up of North Korean force levels, the impact of normalizations with China and the new peace proposal or discussion for peace that have been put forward by South and North Korean governments."<sup>80</sup>

Also, the joint communique that came out after Carter's visit to Seoul (Carter visited the ROK on 29 July 1979), stated that only the US would maintain a strong military presence in Korea without making clear whether such a continued presence would include ground combat forces.<sup>81</sup>

On 20 July 1979, Z. Brezezinski, National Adviser to President Carter, read a White House statement to the press declaring that the President had given up plans to withdraw US ground forces from South Korea by 1982. According to the announcement, withdrawals planned for 1979, 1980 and 1981, totalling over 20,000 men, were suspended. The White House statement also said that a reassessment of US forces in South Korea would be conducted in 1981 based on two factors: (1) "the restoration of a satisfactory North-South military

balance," and (2) "evidence of a tangible progress toward a reduction of tension on the peninsula".<sup>82</sup>

What do all these mean? What led Carter to change his mind from an unconditional withdrawal to a conditional one?

Many observers have cited a single factor in the troop withdrawal suspension. It was a new intelligence estimate of North Korean military strength which came to light in January 1979 showing North Korea to have a stronger military force than US intelligence experts had previously believed.<sup>83</sup> However, this argument, even if true, does not provide a convincing case. This only meant that a North Korean superiority in the peninsula was not liked by the US. But the real reason was that the ROK was too important a country to be neglected. To put it differently, the opponents of the withdrawal won a big score by convincing Carter on the importance of the ROK. Now we will see these arguments in a concised manner.

The problem may be seen from ~~the~~ two angles. First, it can be viewed in terms of the ROK in particular, i.e. the importance of the country as such to the US. Secondly, it can be seen in terms of the ROK in general, i.e. the view of the US toward the North East Asia, as a whole.

Viewed from the first angle, the ROK was (is) one of the important trading partners of the USA.<sup>84</sup> The economic interactions between the two countries was

growing stronger day by day. The annual volume of trade, for instance, between the ROK and the US which was only 150 million dollars in 1961, grew 30 times in 15 years to become \$4.5 billion in 1976.<sup>85</sup> (the latest survey made in 1982 shows that the ROK is the 12th largest trading partner of the US.<sup>86</sup>) The US private investment, similarly, has been on a constant increase. For example, the American foreign investment in 1977 was worth of 6,729 thousand dollars in cash and 5,068 thousand dollars in capital goods. These figures in 1978 were respectively \$7,155 thousand and \$6677 thousand. In 1979 they were \$10,079 thousand and \$19778 thousand. In 1980 they were \$49,826 thousand and \$10,527 thousand.<sup>87</sup> These figures reveal how interested the American investors were in the ROK. Therefore, had Carter not changed his policy about withdrawal, this trend of increasing investment would have come to a halt, as no massive American private or institutional economic involvement in the ROK's economy would have been possible without the US government guaranteeing the security of that state.

Hence it was quite likely that the American business community might have employed heavy pressure upon the Carter administration to reconsider the withdrawal scheme. It is nothing surprising as the effectiveness of pressure groups in American polity is well-known. It is also in this sense that one can

say that "the military industrial complex" in the USA might have pressurized the government as the ROK, as will be shown in the next chapter, is one of the major armed importers of the US.

Secondly, Carter administration realized that if the withdrawal policy <sup>were to</sup> ~~would~~ be vigorously implemented then that would intensify the arms race in the peninsula. Most importantly, the ROK, being not sure of American commitment, would join the race in acquiring nuclear weapons.<sup>88</sup> Prevention of nuclear proliferation was one of the most important pronounced policies of Carter. Hence, in this sense, the American military presence in the peninsula was an "arms control" measure.

As far as viewing the situation in the Asian context is concerned, we can begin with the strategic importance of North East Asia to the US. This fact was very much realised by Carter's predecessors, and hence we need not repeat it here. We only will point out the arguments of critics about the dangerous implications of Carter's original policy.

Donald S. Zagoria, an expert on Far East<sup>89</sup> feared that the withdrawal would tantamount to the increasing reservations of the PRC about the dependability of the US as a Pacific Power willing and able to help counter-balance the growing Soviet strength in the region.

He also pointed out that from his personal interview with the high Soviet officials, he came to know that the Russians regarded Kim Il-sung to be a "hot potato", who,

if the USA did not provide the "deterrence" by being militarily present in the peninsula, would wage a war and thereby would "suck" them (Russians) into an "involuntary" involvement".<sup>90</sup>

The most important but dangerous implication that the withdrawal would have, Zagoria, like many,<sup>91</sup> pointed out, was the threat to the security of Japan and the consequent Japanese behaviour. For, Japan, like the ROK, believed that North Korea would attack the South. In that case, the possibility of the ROK becoming communist could not be ruled out. That was why Takeo Fukuda, the ex-Prime Minister of Japan once told Carter: "The 40,000 ground forces in South Korea are considered a barrier to attack from the communist north and a shield for Japan and other democratic countries in Asia".<sup>92</sup>

Thus the withdrawal, if continued, it was argued, Japan would be cautious of its defense. It would doubt the utility of the mutual defense treaty which was being maintained and regarded highly by both the USA and Japan. On the other hand, the ruling LDP would face many challenges and there would be a nation-wide call in Japan for rearmament. A rearmed Japan would destroy the whole edifice of balance of power in Asia. Besides, the opponents of withdrawal, argued that it would provide a big impetus to the advocates in Japan for the country going nuclear.

Thus all these scholars seemed to agree with the view that the US alone could fit the role of a guardian in the power game played in North East Asia. For, "it

is a stark reality of Asian power politics that China and Russia would prefer the American presence in the Korean peninsula to the Japanese. Given a choice between Japanese militarism and American militarism, the Chinese and Russians would choose the latter any time".<sup>93</sup>

Taking all the aforesaid factors into consideration all the critics viewed that Carter's intended policy was irresponsible. One of them<sup>94</sup> went to the extent of concluding that the failure of the post-war policy of American involvement in Indo-China was far outweighed by the successes. The successes, apart from being responsible for the high economic growth in the allied countries, certainly contributed to China's indicating in 1970-71 that it too saw advantages in a strong American military and political presence in Asia.

It was also argued that Carter gave no time for his crucial decision (scarcely more than a week after he took office) to be reviewed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the American military <sup>Command</sup> in the ROK, and even the State Department.<sup>95</sup> Z. Brezenziski, given his strategic views, would have found it difficult to accept.

Among the American military, the shock produced by the decision was even greater. General John K. Singlaub, Chief of the Staff of the US forces in Korea, spoke up against the policy in the public. He was promptly transferred to another post.<sup>96</sup> Yet, in mid-July 1977, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General George Brown,

testified before the Congress that Carter's pull-out was in "fundamental conflict" with the Chief's recommendation that only "7000 of the 33,000 ground troops in South Korea be withdrawn over a period of next five years".<sup>97</sup> As a result, the Congress rejected Carter's plan by a vote of "79 to 15".<sup>98</sup>

It was also pointed out that unlike the case in Vietnam, neither in the ROK nor in the US <sup>was there</sup> any public discontent against the continued American military presence in the ROK ~~was there~~. In the ROK, there were no slogans such as "Yankees, go home". Nor even the main opposition parties like the New Democratic Party (NDP) ever indicated its opposition to American connection.<sup>99</sup> There in the US, a CBS New York Times poll of July 1977 showed that 52 per cent of those surveyed favoured retention of the American ground forces in Korea, while 34 per cent were in favour of removing them.<sup>100</sup> One year later, a national public opinion poll conducted by Potomac Associates found that 53 per cent favoured keeping US forces in Korea at their present level or increasing their size.<sup>101</sup> This suggested, it was argued, that the Administration misread the American opinion too.

As far as the question of violation of human rights was concerned, it was contended by scholars like Robert A. Scalapino<sup>102</sup> that South Korea should not be seen as a Western model liberal democracy, that historically it inherited an indigenous authoritarian culture and that



South Koreans enjoyed more freedom than their North Korean brothers.

It was also pointed out by the opponents of the withdrawal plan that the violation of the human rights became severe in the ROK mainly due to the uncertainty about the American commitment to that state.<sup>103</sup> For, the Seoul regime did not want to encourage the internal dissent which it thought to be conducive to the North Korean design.

### III(C)

All the aforesaid criticisms targetted at Carter Administration were a bit overreaction. This does not, however, undermine the importance of the fact that these criticisms played an important role in impressing Carter as far as the anticipated negative implications of his policy were concerned.

But Carter, concretely speaking, did not deviate fundamentally from the path already opened up by Nixon. If Carter, at all, deviated from such a path, then it was in his more specific and explicit remarks and his linking up the American commitment to the ROK's security with the human rights situation there. Whereas Nixon talked of only withdrawal, Carter fixed a specific time limit for doing so. But the idea remained the same, i.e. gradual disengagement. Even Ford, as has been pointed out,<sup>104</sup> was thinking of ~~continuity~~ in terms of withdrawal, but realising the importance of the area, he intended to pursue a policy of gradual withdrawal without opening it

in air. Never during his short term, Ford rejected or even sought a readjustment in the "Nixon doctrine", the main logic behind the withdrawal. Carter was going to do the same under the name of the so-called "phased withdrawal". The only new idea that Carter put forth was the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons (we have seen it). The Nixon doctrine, on the other hand, favoured its deployment as it provided all its allies the "nuclear umbrella". It is in this sense that one can say that the opponents of Carter's policy scored a big point over him in not enabling the latter to put his idea into shape. Otherwise Carter strictly followed the policy of continuity.

At the beginning of 1976, before the Presidential race got under way, the Brakings<sup>o</sup> Institution published a book by Ralph Clough, a prominent expert on Far Eastern questions,<sup>105</sup> which was at once regarded as Carter's Korean programme.<sup>106</sup> Clough thought that the US had to be given two or more years to come to itself after Indo-China to weigh its forces and possibilities, and not to undertake anything in Korea that might undermine the faith of the allies in its commitments. After that, he said, the US could examine the question of withdrawing the nuclear weapons and land ~~xxxx~~ forces while retaining the air force, depending upon the circumstances, and acting in close cooperation with South Korea and Japan, and taking North Korea's mood and policy into account. In the long term, Clough's plan

provided for the complete withdrawal of American troops as the result of a relaxation of the tensions between the two Korean sides, considerable progress between them, recognition of North Korea and South Korea by the four big powers (the US, USSR, China, Japan) and their admission to the membership of the UN.

In fact, Carter's policy during this term, aimed at the above directions. In 1976, to ensure that South Korea did not undermine its faith in the US, Carter proposed to Congress a draft bill to authorize the transfer of about 800 million dollars worth of US-owned defense articles to South Korean government. This bill was known as the Compensatory Aid Bill.<sup>107</sup> What was more important was that the Defense Secretary Brown later said: "The President's troop withdrawal policy in Korea should be revised if the compensatory measures for withdrawal were not approved by the Congress."<sup>108</sup>

Equally significant was Carter's different, rather lenient, stand taken against the ROK in his condemnations for the violation of human rights. For instance, Mark L. Schneider, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Rights in his statement before the House of Representatives said, when asked about the reason for the comparatively mild actions taken by the government with regard to Korea (which only included the American abstentions in the Asian Development Bank's sanctions of loans to South Korea), that there were other major American interests

involved in Korea that cut across the human rights concerns, and that all this must be taken into considerations before an integrated plan of actions was taken.<sup>109</sup>

Similarly, Carter like Nixon and Ford continued to have hopes on a political solution of the Korean question. That is why Cyrus Vance, Carter's Foreign Secretary, once remarked: "We are prepared to move toward improved relations with North Korea, provided North Korea's allies take steps to improve relations with South Korea."<sup>110</sup> This <sup>was not contrary to</sup> ~~virtually meant~~ Kissinger's plan of the recognition of the two Koreas by the four big powers.

To sum up the US policy approach toward the ROK's security during Carter Administration, we may say that the overall policy initiated by the Nixon Administration was maintained. However, there were ~~three~~ perceptible changes in three major areas. They were the specificity about the fixed period by the end of which the total withdrawal would take place, interlinking the American commitment to the ROK and the condition of the human rights there, and finally the proposal to remove the tactical nuclear weapons from the ROK. Indeed, the last one was a major deviation of the "Nixon doctrine". But all these proposed changes were never put into shape. Two factors can be attributed to this. First, the planned "departures" might have been due to the political expediency on the part of a Presidential candidate, who, to win the

election, tried to discredit the Republican Administration which had given the Americans the humiliation of Indo-China debacle. Secondly, Carter met the vociferous protests from the influential intellectuals and most importantly from "his" own departments. There was not a single element of untruth when one White House aide described the contending forces within the Administration on the issue in the following words: "On one side there is the President, and on the other side there is everyone else".<sup>111</sup>

- 1 See William J. Barnds, "East Asia in American Foreign Policy", The Korean Journal of International Studies (Seoul), vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 7-21.
- 2 See Allen S. Whiting, "China and the Use of Force : Retrospect and Prospect", The Korean Journal of International Studies, vol. 6, no. 1, 1974, 75. , pp 13-36
- 3 See also, A. Doak Barnett, "The New Multipolar Balance in East Asia : Implications for US Policy", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, vol. 390, July 1970.
- 4 Quoted, Time, 3 January 1972.
- 5 For details, see Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1968-69 (Council on Foreign Relations), pp. 329-34.
- 6 Ibid., p. 333.
- 7 The Department of State Bulletin (Washington, D.C.), vol. LXI, no. 1587, 24 November 1969, p. 440.
- 8 Quoted, "In Search of Self-Reliance : US Security Assistance to the Third World", A Report Prepared For Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (Rand Corporation, Washington, D.C.), June 1973, p. 4.
- 9 Quoted, Ibid., p. 2.
- 10 Ibid., p. 12.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 See Kim Young-jun, "National Security in the 1970s", Korea Journal (Seoul), vol. 10, no. 5, May 1970.
- 13 The Department of the State Bulletin, vol. LXI, no. 1587, 24 November 1969, p. 448.
- 14 Ralph N. Clough, East Asia and US Security (Washington D.C., 1975), p. 2.
- 15 Quoted, Ibid., p. 27.
- 16 The New York Times, 26 July 1969.
- 17 The fact that the Pacific is important to the security of the US as it is a Pacific Power was cited by all the critics of the policy of "disengagement" from the region. This we will see in the later section of this paper.

- 17 The New York Times, 26 July 1969.
- 18 See Pyong-Choon Hahn, "Korea and the Emerging Asian Power Balance", Foreign Affairs (New York), vol. 50, 1972, pp. 339-50. Also see, Gene Gregory, "Two Koreas In a New Balancing Act", United Asia (Bombay), vol. 24, 1972.
- 19 The Department of State Bulletin, no. 1590, 1969, pp. 555-57.
- 20 See Hantano Hirokazu, "Hawks in the China Shop", Japan Quarterly (Tokyo), vol. 17, no. 3, 1970, p. 256.
- 21 We have seen it in the previous chapter.
- 22 Japan Press Weekly (Tokyo), 11 April 1970. Also see its issue of 10 July 1970.
- 23 Peking Review (Peking), vol. 12, no. 48, 28 November 1969, p. 28. North Korea held the same attitude too.
- 24 See the Joint Communiqué of the DPRK and the PRC in Peking Review (Peking), vol. 13, no. 15, 10 April 1970, pp. 3-5.
- 25 Korea Herald, 21 October 1969.
- 26 See News Week, 26 October 1970.
- 27 The New York Times, 27 December 1970.
- 28 The New York Times, 5 October 1970.
- 29 See Philip Habib's answer in "Shifting Balance of Power in Asia, Implications for Future US Policy", Hearings Before the Sub-Committee on Future Foreign Policy Research and Development of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 94th Congress, p. 28.
- 30 The New York Times, 3 January 1971.
- 31 The Korea Herald, 24 August 1971.
- 32 The Department of State Bulletin, 13 August, 1973, no. 1781, p. 253.
- 33 The Department of State Bulletin, No. 1852, 23 December 1974, pp. 875-76.
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The new intelligence estimates in January 1979, with subsequent refinements, placed North Korean ground forces at between 600,000 and 700,000 men rather than the 440,000, previously estimated (5th largest army). These forces are believed to be equivalent to over 40 combat divisions instead of the prior estimate of 29 divisions. In offensive weaponry, North Korea has 2,600 tanks (including approximately 300 T-62 tanks, the main battle tank of the Soviet army until 1976), 1000 armoured personnel carriers, 1500-2000 multiple rocket launchers, 9000 mortars, and 3500-4000 field artillery weapons. North Korean ground forces now outnumber the South Korean ground force of 560,000 organized into 22 combat divisions. Pyongyang's lead in weaponry is 3 to 1 in tanks, 2 to 1 in mortars and nearly 2 to 1 in the field of artillery pieces. (pp.332-33).
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- 109 Hearings Before the Sub-Committee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 95th Congress (Washington, D.C., 1977), pp.2-8 and 19.
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- 111 Quoted, G. Porter, n.68, p.52.

CHAPTER IV  
THE ALLIANCE AT WORK

I

In the previous chapters efforts have been made to understand the undercurrents of the policies adopted by the ROK and the USA toward each other, particularly in the security field. To put it differently, it has been seen "how" and "why" the security has been a significant determinant in the relations between the two countries. Attempts will be made in this chapter to find out "what" this relationship is. Our focus will be on the functioning of the "alliance" between the two.

Of the various ways through which the US has been involved in the field of the ROK's security, two are more important, although between the two there lies a thin line of separation. This separation has been made to give scope to both the US and the ROK to justify the physical presence of the American troops in the southern half of the peninsula on either of the grounds. The first of the two is the United Nations Command which was established on 7 July 1950 under a resolution of the Security Council immediately after the outbreak of the Korean war. The UN forces were formed with the troops from sixteen countries.<sup>1</sup> The function of the United Nations Command (UNC) was to control and coordinate military operations of the troops from the sixteen nations.<sup>2</sup> After the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed in 1953, most of the sixteen nations withdrew

their troops from Korea, although they promised that "if there is a renewal of the armed attack .... we should again be united and prompt to resist...."<sup>3</sup> Thus the UNC in effect and in reality meant (means) the US command, as the US has yet to withdraw its troops.

In addition to justifying its military presence through the UN Command, the US also has been tied militarily with the ROK through the Mutual Defense Treaty,<sup>4</sup> which was signed on 1 October 1953 and came into force after ratification on 17 November 1954. We have discussed the treaty in details in the introductory chapter of this study. Suffice to mention here the fact that the US is committed according to the treaty, to render assistance including the use of armed forces, if the Congress (American) so decides to the ROK when the area under the administrative control of the latter, recognised by the US to be legitimate, faces an "armed attack". Secondly, the Treaty in its Article IV granted the US "the right to dispose United States land, air and sea forces in and about the territory of the ROK as determined by mutual agreement."

## II

The Mutual Defense Treaty (Article II) provides the ROK and the US to maintain and develop appropriate means to deter a possible attack and those means including

"mutual aid" like military and financial assistance. In our case study it will be established that the aid is not mutual as it is the US which alone is the donor of all aids. Our task in the following paragraphs is to see the pattern of the flow of the aids, particularly the military assistance, from the US to the ROK.

In the beginning, the philosophy behind the United States Military Assistance should be pointed out. The basic legislation that authorised the Military Assistance Programme (MAP) said that the programme was to promote "... the peace of the world and the foreign policy, security, and general welfare of the US by fostering an improved climate of political independence and individual liberty, improving the ability of friendly countries and international organizations to deter or, if necessary, defeat communist or communist supported aggression, facilitating arrangements for individual and collective security, assisting friendly countries to maintain internal security, and creating an environment of security and stability in the developing friendly countries essential to their more rapid social, economic and political progress".<sup>5</sup>

Thus the Military Assistance Programme (of the USA) is not an economic aid. It is a programme which provides military equipment and weapons and training to those allied and friendly nations which share the American view

as to the threat of international communism. These states are known as "forward defense States"<sup>6</sup> (like Turkey, Greece, Taiwan, the Philippines and the ROK). More interesting is the fact that military transfer today is also justified in terms of other national considerations. Delivering arms "helps to balance the budget, reduce trade deficits, assure full employment, increase income, create friends and strengthen alliance".<sup>7</sup> Thus, the Military Assistance is an important aspect or instrument of the overall foreign policy objectives of the US. It is in tune with the US national-global interests in general and its defense posture in particular.

The military assistance programme of the US is of two types. Uptil the mid-1960s military aids and grants had been the most common type of transfers. In the case of the ROK, prior to the beginning of the Korean War, most of the American assistance had taken the form of economic grants (80 per cent for economic reconstruction and 20 per cent for military rearmament); but after the war, more emphasis was given on/reconstruction (now it became 50-50).<sup>8</sup>

The other type of transfer was foreign military sales (FMS). It came into prominence in the mid-1960s. The shift from grants to sales could be explained by the changes in the international environment. They were the high costs of maintenance of military forces overseas



which was considered to be one of the reasons for the balance of payments problem that the US suffered from; the Nixon Doctrine which projected more arms supplies to the allies and a shared defense burden; and the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the oil crisis which really pushed US arms exports into world prominence.<sup>9</sup> Now, the arms exports seemed to be a way out. In this, the US had a favourable market advantage as much of the sophisticated equipment desired by other nations was being produced by the US.

The FMS was important from another angle. It helped in establishing a coordinated weapons system of the US and its allies.<sup>10</sup> The integration of the weapon systems, it was felt, would avoid a situation in which one ally has a shortage of one item while another would have a surplus, thereby making the resistance to the enemy highly vulnerable. In short, the US wanted to have sufficient information about its allies' logistics so as to prepare adequately the defense network against its adversaries. As long as the US had been the major supplier of weapons to the allies, the Department of State had the relatively adequate information on what weapons the allies had, their quality and quantity. Therefore, it was recommended that coordination of allied logistics was vital and that it would only be workable if the US kept up its importance as a major source of modern weapons.

It is against this general background that we shall see the military transfers from the US to the ROK. In the beginning, it should be made clear that the USA is the largest (rather the country) supplier of military assistance and goods to the ROK. The other notable countries doing business in this field with the ROK are France, Federal Republic of Germany and Italy.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, it was found out in a survey made in 1975 that the ROK was the second allied country, after Vietnam (South), which, during the period between mid-1945 to mid-1974, got the maximum amount of American aid which included both economic and military aids, although the latter overwhelmed the former (It got more aid than Japan, Israel, UK, France, Pakistan, Taiwan and Brazil).<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, the US military transfers to the ROK have shown ups and downs, as will be shown now, reflecting the intensity of the military situation in the peninsula. American military supplies to the ROK rose substantially in the second half of the 1950s.<sup>13</sup> However, in the first half of the 1960s, "the arms flow to South Korea saw a discernible slow down reflecting the reduced threat from North Korea which received almost no supplies from the Soviet Union during this period".<sup>14</sup> American aid was increasingly limited to

the replacement and maintenance of the existing equipment, and by 1965, ammunitions, parts, food and training accounted for some 80 per cent of US military assistance to South Korea.<sup>15</sup>

The direct intervention of the US in Vietnam in 1965 brought a change in its military aid policy toward the ROK. The arms flow increased sharply for two main reasons. They were: "the resumption of arms supplies to North Korea; and the US' promise of helping South Korea modernise its armed forces in exchange for Korean troops dispatched to Vietnam".<sup>16</sup> This increase was further accelerated by the implementation of Nixon Doctrine. Further, Carter Administration pledged \$1,500 million worth of surplus military equipment and foreign military sales credit in the context of the proposed withdrawal of the US troops from South Korea.<sup>17</sup>

Subsequently, the US House of Representatives' International Relations Committee in early 1978 passed for the ROK the \$800 million arms-transfer bills, \$277 million military assistance for financial year (FY) 1979 and \$90 million for war reserve stockpiles, as requested by the Carter Administration.<sup>18</sup> Out of these \$277 million, \$275 million were for foreign military sales credit assistance, and the rest \$2 million were for military training aid for Korea (South).<sup>19</sup> Later, the Senate passed the bill too.<sup>20</sup>

If the pattern of the military assistance is taken into account, then the following points should be taken note of. First, there has been a declining trend year by year of the assistance coming under the MAP to the ROK. This can be seen from the following table.<sup>21</sup>

Table 1

Military Assistance Programme - Includes Military Assistance Service Funded and Excludes Training (Dollars in Thousands)

FY 1950	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
3600516	520761	470383	298593	87978	77828	58921	1047	528	11030

The sudden rise in 1979 may be attributed to Carter's rethinking about the military situation in Korea. All these funds under MAP were used for providing military equipment and related services and training. Also included in this programme were transfers to Korea under section 3, PL 91-652 during FY 1971 and FY 1972.<sup>22</sup>

Secondly, the transfers under the FMS programme went on increasing. For instance, whereas in the period between FY 1950 and FY 1970, the FMS Agreements amounted to \$4842 thousand out of which Articles worth of \$4333<sup>thousand</sup> were delivered, In FY 1971, equipments worth of \$408 thousand were delivered out of the agreements of \$393 thousand made during the year.

The ratio (in thousand dollars) of the deliveries and the agreements showed the following pattern. In FY 1972 it was 370:8731; <sup>in FY 1973 it was 2378/1600</sup> in FY 1974 it was 13308:96186; in FY 1975 it was 70707:221298; in FY 1976 it was 159546:612137; in FY 1977 it was 176917: 628116; in FY 1978 it was 413635:406613, and in FY 1979 it was 404225:232479.<sup>23</sup>

The Foreign Military Sales included the following categories: Aircraft (including spares) of various types, ships (including spares), ammunition, missiles (including spares), vehicles and weapons (including spares), communication equipments (including spares), other equipment and supplies, construction, repair and rehabilitation of equipment, supply operations, training and technical assistance, special services, books, maps and publications, undefinitized and adjustments.<sup>24</sup>

### III

It has already been pointed out that the US maintains military presence in the ROK. We may now see the forms of this presence.

To begin with, there is a very thin line of separation, as said earlier, between the UNC and other US forces as both are commanded by the same "Commander-in-Chief". The UNC is composed almost entirely of the US troops plus token forces from a handful of other nations.<sup>25</sup> Under an Agreement of 26 May 1961, the Commander-in-Chief

of the UNC has the "operational control of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces" to "defend the Republic of Korea from the communist aggression".<sup>26</sup> This does not mean that Korean Armed Forces are controlled by the UNC. The latter can attain this position only in case of a war situation, that too when the state is attacked. Otherwise, the main function of the UNC is to maintain the Armistice Agreement. However, it is ensured that prompt support and assistance of both the American and Korean (ROK) combat forces would be given to the UNC whenever it gives them the directives to respond to the violations of the armistice.<sup>27</sup>

Now about the main US combat forces in the ROK. In late 1979, almost 41,500 US military personnel (33,000 army, 300 navy and 7900 air force) were in Korea.<sup>28</sup> Before describing the various components (Army, Air and Navy), which all these personnel belong to, it is necessary to point out the fact that these military personnel and the necessary military installations should not be seen in isolation while talking of the efficiency of the American strength in the ROK. The overall American military presence in the entire North-East Asia and the nearby area should be taken into account. This is especially true of the air and naval forces.<sup>29</sup> In a war-operation, the aircrafts, for instance, from one base to another (situated in Japan, the Philippines, Hawaii, etc.) can be deployed rapidly.

So also is the case of the navy. Let us see the scenario in details.

The principal ground force elements are the Second Infantry Division (till 1971, the US had two divisions - second and seventh; but the latter was withdrawn, as noted in the previous chapter, during the Presidency of Richard Nixon in 1971) and two command headquarters (eighth US Army and the Combined ROK/US Field Army which till 14 March 1980 was known as the Korea-US First Army Corps, created in July 1971 - it was the integration of second US infantry division and twelfth South Korean Army Corps into a combined command following the withdrawal of the seventh US Infantry Division), the Thirtyeighth Air Defense Artillery Brigade and the First Signal Brigade. The army troops list includes a number of other supporting elements - notably logistic engineer, aviation and intelligence.<sup>30</sup> Added to all this is the combined forces command (CFC) which was created in 1978 in order to increase the operational efficiencies and their manifestations by the joint US-ROK forces to prepare themselves against an eventual attack.

As far as the command is concerned, the CFC, the US forces in Korea, the eighth US Army and the UNO are commanded by the same US Army General. As the Commander,

United States Forces, Korea, he has to report to the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific and has no operational control of the US forces (covering air and navy) stationed in Korea. But as the Commanding General, Eighth US Army, he has the operational control of the US Armed Forces (only), although he has to report to the Commander-in-Chief, US Army, Pacific.<sup>31</sup> As regards the CFC,<sup>32</sup> he is the Supreme Commander. His deputy, i.e. Deputy <sup>Supreme</sup> CFC Commander is a Korean General. But the Commander of the CFC, always an American, exercises operational control over the assigned forces through ground, naval and air component commander. The CFC Commander serves in a dual role as the overall and ground component Commander. The naval component is commanded by an Admiral from the ROK and his deputy is a US Admiral. The Chief of the Staff of the CFC, a US Air Force Lieutenant General serves as the Air Component Commander. His deputy is a ROK Air Force Lieutenant General.

The unique thing about the CFC is the fact that most of the personnel under the operational control of the CFC are Korean combat forces elements - the army and naval components being totally manned by the ROK forces, especially during the peace time. Thus, as the Commander of the CFC (a US Lieutenant General) and the Commander of the combined ROK/US Field Army (another US



Lieutenant General), the US military authorities exercise the operational control over the very core of the ROK army.

A brief reference to the US forces may be in order. The largest single unit, with an approximate strength of 13,000, the US Armed Second Infantry Division is located primarily at the Camp Casey, about 30 k.m. from the DMZ. The division mainly is the eighth Army Reserve, although one battalion is located forward at the southern edge of the DMZ to provide security for the UN personnel at Panmunjom (It should be remembered that many Senators, as we saw in the previous chapter, were concerned with the battalions "trip-wise" position that "guaranteed" US automatic involvement in case of North Korean attack). In fact, the critical areas between the DMZ and Seoul are marked by the deployment of the combined ROK/US Field Army. The other notable military (army) bases are Taegu, Pusan, Inchon and <sup>Yongsan</sup> Yeongsan/Seoul.<sup>33</sup>

The Nineteenth Support Brigade and the Second Transport Company support the Second Division logistically, being manned nearly by 4,000 personnel.<sup>34</sup> The nineteenth support brigade provides the mechanism required to manage the flow of combat supply to the ROK's armed forces from the very outset of the hostilities.

The thirty-eighth Air Defense Artillery Brigade operates air defense systems,<sup>35</sup> the most important of

which is the Hawk surface-to-air missiles which provides the first line of air defense against preemptive attack. This is particularly crucial in the forward areas where flight time from North Korean air fields is too short for interceptor aircraft to respond from nearby airfields. Indeed, the Hawk is the first line of air defense against preemptive strikes on forward communications, surveillance and the air defense radars, which are generally on high ground and particularly vulnerable.

The First Signal Brigade about 3,000 men, maintains the communications and surveillance networks. It should be noted here that the US has organized a world-wide communications network, called the Defense Communications System (DCS)<sup>36</sup> which utilizes even satellites for strategic matters that necessitate secrecy. Through this, the US has linked both Japan and the ROK. Both these countries are connected by other means also, thanks to the US. The most important nerve connecting Japan and the ROK is the OH communications system linking Chang Ean (Pusan) and Itatsuke in Kyuch, Japan.<sup>37</sup>

The communications equipments that are placed in the ROK are highly sophisticated and maintained by the US personnel only. There are no attempts to train the ROK nationals adequately to operate these installations (It is not clear, however, from the available literature whether the ROK ever requested the US for such trainings).

If communications depended on the equipment ROK nationals could operate, the Commander's ability to communicate, and hence exercise command and control throughout the theatre would be sharply curtailed. Moreover, it is the surveillance capability of this group on which the UN command depends for early warning of a build-up in the North. The proximity of Seoul to the DMZ makes an early warning capability vital.

The Fourth Missile Brigade operates surface-to-surface missiles including the nuclear ones capable of delivery systems. The US has been maintaining stock of tactical nuclear weapons in the ROK since 1958.<sup>37</sup> While details of deployments are closely guarded secret, the following aspects of deployment are public knowledge.<sup>39</sup>

1. Nuclear warheads in the ROK number fewer than 1,000,650, which is a reasonable estimate. 2. They are held well south of the DMZ to protect the <sup>storage</sup> ~~shortage~~ sites and also to ensure that in the event of hostilities, there would be time for a presidential decision regarding their employment.

The nuclear arrangements are as follows:<sup>40</sup>

The Fourth Missile Command, under the Eighth Army has sergeant missiles with a range of 135 km stationed at Chuncheon in the central region of the Korean peninsula. The nuclear warheads on this missile are of 100 kilo ton class (about five times as powerful as

the Hiroshima bomb). In addition, Hohenest John missiles with a range of 40 km are positioned north of Seoul; their warheads are reported to be in the 20 kilo ton class.

At Usan where the Army's Thirtyeighth Artillery Brigade and the Air Force's 314 division headquarters are located, two battalions of the anti-aircraft Nike Hercules and Hawk missiles are deployed. The Nike warhead is considered to be from one to ten kilo tons. The Air Force is also prepared to launch tactical nuclear attacks from F-4 war planes. Also, a total of 60 Phantoms based at Usan and Kunsan have nuclear capability. There is no doubt that the nuclear bombs are being stored at these bases.<sup>41</sup>

The US also stations contingents of its Air Forces in the ROK.<sup>42</sup> It maintains the equivalent of a full air wing of F-4C/E tactical fighter aircraft, split between the Eighth tactical Fighter Wing at Osan, located near Seoul; and the Fifty-first composite tactical wing at Kunsan, about 160 km further South. These units can be reinforced rapidly by the Nineteenth Tactical Fighter Wing stationed at Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa and by the First US Marine Wing at Iwakuni, Japan. Carrier aircraft can be brought into conflict as well. These combined forces, together with the ROK air force pose a formidable challenge to any possible, although most *not* probable, North Korean invasion. There are also units in

Japan which maintain facilities that will support military operations in Korea. During the Korean war, these bases served as safe areas for short-term storage of material destined for Korea, as holding points for personnel being moved to and from the front and as staging areas for bombing raids.

Compared to Army and Air Forces, the US naval presence in the ROK is negligible. Its presence is largely to advise the ROK navy and to coordinate its operations with the seventh fleet.<sup>43</sup> However, it has been agreed that in the war time, the Seventh Fleet would have to aid the ROK navy, particularly by preventing the North's submarine force from interdicting vital shipping, and to ensure a flow of war material and other imported supplies to Pusan.<sup>44</sup>

#### IV

In this section of the chapter, we intend to highlight the operational part of the alliance.

The functioning of the alliance (strictly in the security sense) has been determined since 1968 to a great extent through the decision arrived at in the annual Defense Ministers' (of both the ROK and the US) conferences. The need for such annual meetings was raised just after the alleged infiltration of the North Korean command unit in Seoul to abortively attack the presidential residence "Blue House" and the seizure of the USS Pueblo in East Sea by the North Korean navy in January 1968. However,

such a practice got institutionalized in 1971 (February) with the decision of the two countries to hold annually the security consultative meetings of Foreign or Defense Ministers of both the countries in the US and the ROK alternately.<sup>45</sup> Henceforward, these meetings were to be known as Korea-US Security Consultative meeting (at the end of the chapter the list of 12 such meetings, their timing, venue, and the names of the representatives, between 1968 and 1979 are given).

That these security consultative meetings are very crucial to the fate of the alliance becomes obvious after one looks into the joint communiques of these meetings.<sup>46</sup> Three significant aspects may be noticed. First, in all these meetings, the ROK has pleaded for and the US has reaffirmed the commitments that are made in the Mutual Defense Treaty. Secondly, these meetings perceive the threats to the security of the ROK <sup>and</sup> analyse the strategic balance prevalent in the region at the given point of time. Thirdly, on the basis of such perceptions, the follow up actions have been decided. These actions, for instance, included the details of the troop withdrawal plan or its suspension, the holding of the joint military exercises, the quantum of aids and assistance to be given to the ROK, keeping the ROK under the US nuclear umbrella and the creation or, or the alternation in the structure of the joint military command (like CFC).

Another notable aspect regarding the functioning of the alliance is the fact that whenever any crisis-situation (rather its perception) has arisen, the strength and the efficacy of the security relationship has been manifested through either the joint military exercises or the redeployment of the military forces, particularly that of the USA.

For example, in the aftermath of the Pueblo crisis, i.e. in 1969, a large scale assault operation was launched in the ROK by some 7,000 US and South Korean troops, including 2,500 US soldiers flown from the continental US.<sup>47</sup> Known as the "Operation Faces Red<sup>5</sup>ina", it was conducted to test the US ability to rush its troops to the ROK in case of an emergency.

Similarly, just after the time of the heavy American bombardment over Vietnam in 1971, one joint air-borne exercise known as "Freedom Vault operation",<sup>48</sup> was held to allay any possible North Korean thinking about the slackening of American presence in the peninsula because of its preoccupation in Indo-China.

Likewise, when the American officers were axe-slaid in 1976 by the North Koreans and subsequently some underground tunnels allegedly built by the North Koreans below the DMZ were discovered, the decision to hold the annual joint military exercises titled "Team Spirit" was taken. Let us see two such exercises.

The "Team Spirit 78" started on 7 March 1978.<sup>49</sup> Highly sophisticated missiles like the Lance missiles, a surface-to-surface missile, capable of carrying either a nuclear or a highly explosive conventional warhead with a range of approximately 110 km were used. A total of 62,000 Koreans and 30,300 Americans out of which more than 23,000 came from US mainland participated in the exercise. Highly sophisticated planes, some of them being flown from the US, showed their might.

Equally impressive was the naval exercise. The notable thing about this Team Spirit was that all the wings (air, navy, army) exhibited together in the air, land and the sea to give a symbolic warning to the North Koreans against their possible adventure.

The "Team Spirit 79"<sup>50</sup> which started on 1 March 1979 was the most powerful of all. A total of 140,000 Korean and US ground, naval and air force personnel participated in the joint and combined operations which were termed as the "defensive" in nature. The American components included the Hawaii based 25th division, a lance missile unit from Fort Still Okla, Seventh Fleet war ships, Okinawa based marines and F-111 sweeping joint aircraft.

Apart from this, two notable joint military exercises were held in 1979.<sup>51</sup> They were: "Cope Jade Charlie", a defensive exercise made by the CFC, and "Combined Anti-Sub-Exercise" to provide naval forces of the two countries with experiences in coordinating air, surface and sub-surface warfare operations. Similarly, when Park Chung-hee



was assassinated on 26 October 1979, the US gave a clear warning against any North Korean exploitation of the situation in the ROK.<sup>52</sup> Two US air-borne warning and control (AWAC) aircrafts were dispatched to the ROK to conduct surveillance "of military movement of North Korea and provide warning to CFC and the UNC. Also, the US swiftly deployed a powerful deterrent armada around the ROK.<sup>53</sup>

Before concluding this chapter, another notable feature of the alliance may be noted. All the American military installations employ a large number of Koreans in them. They work in such capacities as clerk-typist, supervisor, key punch operator, mechanic, vehicle dispatcher, security guard, sentry dog handler and a myriad of other occupations.<sup>54</sup> Importantly, according to J. A. Wickham Jr., the then UNC Chief, it is the Korean agencies which participate in the maintenance of the US forces equipment (although they do not operate them).<sup>55</sup> Similarly, the constructions of the new military installations are assigned to the Korean contractors.<sup>56</sup> In this sense, the presence in Korea of substantial US forces and military installations, not only contributes to ROK's defense, it also substantially benefits the ROK's economy.

Foot Notes

## CHAPTER IV

- 1 See the list of the countries in Appendix XIV, Hearings Before the Sub-Committee on US Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, 91 Congress, Second Session, Part 6 (Washington, D.C., 1970), pp.1725-26.
- 2 Korea Annual (Seoul), 1980, p.99.
- 3 See Appendix XIV, Hearings, n.1, p.1726.
- 4 See Appendix XIV, Hearings, n.1, pp.1716-17.
- 5 Quoted, Harold A. Havey, United States Military Assistance : A Study of Policies and Practices (Prager Publishers, New York, 1966), p.5.
- 6 Eun Ho Lee, "Arms Transfers and Arms Race in the Korean Peninsula : Implications of the Super Powers Policies", Korea Observer (Seoul), vol.12, no.4, Winter 1981, p.377.
- 7 George Thayer, The War Business : The International Trade in Armaments (New York, 1969), p.369.
- 8 David J. Louscher, "The Rise of Military Sales As a US Foreign Assistance Instrument", Orbis (Philadelphia), vol.20, no.3, Fall 1976, p.938.
- 9 SIPRI Yearbook 1980, p.69.
- 10 David J. Louscher, n.8.
- 11 See United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (USACDA), World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1969-78, p.156.
- 12 US News and World Report, 20 January 1975.
- 13 Eun Ho Lee, n.6, p.382.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 SIPRI Yearbook, 1975, p.157.
- 16 Eun Ho Lee, n.6, p.382.
- 17 Korea Annual (Seoul), 1978.
- 18 Korea News Review (Seoul), vol.7, no.19, 13 May 1978.

- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Korea News Review (Seoul), vol.7, no.31, 5 August 1978.
- 21 Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts (December, 1980), Published by Data Management Division, Comptroller, Department of Defense Security Assistance Agency (Washington, D.C.).
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 *Choi Chang-goon*, "Korea: Security and Strategic Issues", Asian Survey, vol.20, no.11, November 1980, p.1131.
- 26 Hearings, n.1, p.1729.
- 27 Korean News Review (Seoul), vol.7, no.48, 18 November 1978.
- 28 The data are as of September 1979, Japan Defense Review (Tokyo), April 1980, p.72.
- 29 See Stuart E. Johnson and Joseph A. Yager, The Military Equation in North-East Asia (Washington D.C. 1979), pp.43-47.
- 30 *Chang-goon*, n.25, p.1130.
- 31 See Hearings, n.1, p.1729.
- 32 For details, see Korea News Review, n.27.
- 33 Hearings, n.1, p.1753.
- 34 See Johnson and Yager, n.29, pp.61-66.
- 35 In the subsequent paragraphs of this section, material ~~will be~~ used extensively, unless mentioned otherwise, from Johnson and Yager, n.29.
- 36 For details, see Fujii Haruo, "A Functional Analysis of the Military Base Systems, Integrating US, Japan and South Korea", AIPO (Japan Asia Quarterly Review, Tokyo), vol.8, no.2, 1976.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Huang I. Kim, "Changing American Values and the US-Korean Relations", Korea Observer (Seoul), vol.11, no.3, Autumn 1980, p.257.

- 39 Johnson & Yager, n.29, pp.43-47.
- 40 See Fujii Haruo, n.36, pp.49-50. See also the table provided at the end of the chapter. Although the table is not up-to-date, as far as the number of total nuclear weapons is concerned, it is useful in understanding the types of nuclear weapons and their explosive powers.
- 41 Fujii Haruo, n.36, p.50.
- 42 Johnson and Yager, n.29, pp.64-66.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 See Korea Annual (Seoul), 1971.
- 46 See all the issues of Korea Annual (Seoul) between the years 1970 and 1979.
- 47 Korea Annual, 1970.
- 48 Korea Annual, 1972.
- 49 For details see Korean News Review (Seoul), vol.7, no.10, 11 March 1978.
- 50 See Korean News Review (Seoul), vol.8, no.45, 10 November 1979.
- 51 For details see, Korea Annual (Seoul), 1980, pp.98-99.
- 52 See Korea News Review (Seoul), vol.8, no.45, 10 November 1979.
- 53 Ibid., p.26.
- 54 Frank A. Kirk, "The Korean Labour Force is the Backbone of the US Army in Korea", in In-Hah Jung, ed., The Feel of Korea (Seoul, 1966), p.107.
- 55 John A. Wickham, Jr., "The Current Security of the Republic of Korea", Korea Observer (Seoul), vol.12, no.3, Autumn, 1981, p.250.
- 56 Ibid.

**Table 2**  
**US Nuclear Arms in Korea**

<b>Service</b>	<b>System</b>	<b>Number of Nuclear Capable Systems</b>	<b>Load &amp; Reload (number per system) (estimates)</b>	<b>Total (estimated)</b>	<b>Explosive Power per warhead (Maximum Killo-tons)</b>
USAF	(Fighter Bomber) F-4	48	4	192	10 kt.
US Army	(Artillery)				
	M-110 (203 mm)	28	2	56	1 kt.
	M-109 (155 mm) (SAM)	76	2	152	1 kt.
	Nike-Hercules (SSM)	144	1	144	5 kt.
	Honest John	4	20	80	100 kt.
	Serjeant	2	6	12	100 kt.
	Atomic Mine	25-50	1	25-50	5 kt.
<b>Total :</b>				<b>661-686</b>	

Source: Centre for Defense Information (CFDI) in D.T. Johnson and B.R. Schneider, ed., Current Issues in US Defense Policy (Praeger Publishers, 1976), p. 52.

Table 3

Korea-US Security Consultative Meetings

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Chief Delegate</u>	
		<u>Korea</u>	<u>USA</u>
May 27-28, 1968	Washington	Choe Yong-hi	Clark Clifford
June 3-4, 1969	Seoul	Im Chung-sik	D. Packard
July 21-23, 1970	Honolulu	Chong Nae-hyok	D. Packard
July 12-13, 1971	Seoul	Chong Nae-hyok	Melvin Laird
June 26-27, 1972	Colorado	Yu Jae-hung	Melvin Laird
September 12-13, 1973	Seoul	Yu Jae-hung	William Clements Jr.
September 23-24, 1974	Honolulu	So Jong-chol	William Clements Jr.
August 26-27, 1975	Seoul	So Jong-chol	James Schlesinger
May 26-27, 1976	Honolulu	So Jong-chol	Donald Rumsfeld
July 25-26, 1977	Seoul	So Jong-chol	Harold Brown
July 25-27, 1978	San Diego	No Jae-hyon	Harold Brown
October 18-19, 1979	Seoul	No Joe-hyon	Harold Brown

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Source: Korea Annual, 1980, p.96.

## CHAPTER V

## CONCLUSIONS

## I

A number of significant conclusions emerge from the foregoing study. The deep involvement of the US does not predate August 1945. Its establishment of official relations with Korea in 1882 can be attributed to its general overview of the Far East in terms of trading and commercial relations. But there were not much interactions between the two countries primarily because the US conceded to Japan's predominant interests in Korea in 1905. Japan, then an emerging imperial power, had to be won over by doing so. This was in return for Japan's restraint toward the Philippines, the country in which the US had a colonial interest. That was probably the reason why the US did not support the freedom movement in Korea after the latter's annexation by Japan in 1910.

Following Japanese attack of Pearl harbour in September 1941, the US changed its attitude toward Korea. The US became mindful of the colonial "enslavement of the Korean people" and supported their just cause for independence, albeit, "in due course", as was clearly demonstrated in the Cairo Declaration. However, while the US was keen to delink Korea from the Japanese colonial yoke, it doubted Korea's capacity to govern itself. Furthermore, the US wanted to play a dominant role in world politics in the post-World War II period. It wanted to assert its position in ~~the~~ <sup>post-war</sup> the settlements.

The applicability of this new American policy depended on a situation in which the US was in an imposing position to have a voice in the affairs of the newly liberated country. It was only possible through the implementation of the idea of "trusteeship" in Korea. But the "trusteeship" could not be exclusive privilege of a single power for, the international scenario in the mid-1940s had undergone profound changes. Therefore, while mooted the "trusteeship" plan, the US enlisted the support of the great powers, including the USSR, Great Britain and China. On the other hand, the attempt toward the establishment of "trusteeship" depended to a large extent upon the military presence of the US in Korea. That was why it sent its troops to Korea on 8 September 1945, almost a month after the arrival of the Soviet Red Army in Korea and full three weeks after the defeat and surrender of Japan. In other words, the USSR alone could have easily enforced the surrender of the Japanese forces in Korea. Against this background, the 38th parallel was drawn to divide the country "temporarily" ostensibly for "military purpose".

Toward the final days of the World War II, the US attitude vis-a-vis the USSR changed from cooperation to confrontation, mainly due to the developments in Europe. It was perceived that behind the spread of "communism", there was a Soviet hand. This attitude was reflected in Korea since 1946. The intensification of the mutual suspicion and distrust between the US and the USSR made



the "trusteeship" proposal, agreed at Moscow, unworkable. Later, the US, in the name of the UN, succeeded in establishing the Republic of Korea (ROK) in the southern half of the peninsula which was under its occupation. The ROK was not considered to be vital to the security of the US, however. Besides the traditional economic interests, the US had also ideological interest in Korea. It was a question of "Free World" versus "communism". With a view to arrest<sup>ing</sup> the possible spread of communism, the US promised to provide the economic and military assistance to the ROK in accordance with the Vandenburg resolution in lines with the Marshall Plan directed towards Europe.

The outbreak of the Korean war in 1950 made the US evolve a concrete strategy toward the ROK, of which security constituted the most vital part. The war was seen as the beginning of the implementation of the grand "communist" design to expand and thus make the world "red". To tackle such a situation, the US, as the undisputed leader of the "Free World", evolved a concrete strategy in which the states around the Communist countries, mainly the USSR and the PRC, would be made the bulwark against the "communist expansion". Known as the "forward defense states" in Asia, these countries in a circular form included Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Thailand, Taiwan and the ROK. In addition, the ROK found a place in the US own "forward defense line" in the Far East which ran

from the coast of Alaska through the Aleutian islands in the Arctic North, than Southward, along a chain of island bases like Japan, Okinawa, Taiwan, the Philippines, and finally Australia and New Zealand.

Secondly, by the late fifties when the USSR had possessed an effective nuclear capability, the US re-emphasised the importance of the conventional war. It is in this line of reasoning, it was decided that the "forward defense" states should be made as strong as possible in the conventional warfare with the help of American training, military supplies and security assistance (financing the military programme).

The aforesaid points, along with the shock caused by the outbreak of the Korean war, were the reasons for the conclusion of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the US and the ROK in 1954. The treaty was an institutional guarantee for the ROK's security.

The presence of the American troops in the ROK can be explained by the fact that the troops came to the ROK (not undivided Korea as was the cause in 1945) after the outbreak of the Korean war to operate under the banner of the UN, and thus the coming was "legitimised". However, it is a moot point whether the American troops' coming depended solely on the outbreak of the war. But once they came and stayed, their withdrawal became politically difficult for, the American presence got

integrated with the other commitments (treaty and security assistance) so that any plan to withdraw the troops was projected as the abandonment of the ROK by the US by those critics who sincerely valued the necessity and desirability of the American military presence in the southern half of Korea. Hence, the presence of the American troops has been inextricably interlinked with the American policy toward Korea.

In this framework, American defense policy toward the ROK in the sixties and seventies should be viewed. The most important change in the American posture since 1950 was the enunciation of <sup>the</sup> "Nixon doctrine" which talked of the American nuclear guarantee of the states attacked by a nuclear power (the USSR and the PRC); but in case of other aggressors, the doctrine pointed out, the affected states should stand themselves to the occasion in collaboration, at best, with the immediate regional and friendly power (Japan in case of the ROK). Also, Nixon promised to provide the material help to the friendly states for gaining strength enough to meet the situation. But this did not mean the abdication of American responsibility to the security of the friendly states. This was not a question of "leaving"; it was a matter of properly "living" in Asia.

In the context of the ROK, Nixon Administration removed one combat division (American) from the country.

Simultaneously, it provided enough assistance to keep the ROK militarily strong. What was important for Nixon was to make the ROK undertake more responsibility for its defense and thus begin the process which over a period of time will create a situation in which the South Koreans themselves would take care of their defense with the least involvement of the US. He, however, <sup>never</sup> spelt out the withdrawal plan.

Gerald Ford who succeeded Nixon also followed the same approach. His administration clearly spoke of the use of nuclear weapons to maintain the stability of North East Asia if the situation so warranted. This was nothing but the added emphasis of that part of the Nixon doctrine which did not rule out the use of nuclear weapons. This was due to the American debacle in Indo-China for, what was now needed was the psychological boosting of the ROK which feared the occurrence of the Vietnam phenomenon in the peninsula. However, unlike Nixon, Ford did not stress upon <sup>the</sup> ~~this~~ aspect of American presence in the ROK.

Broadly, Carter, however, followed his predecessors' policy. He, however, sought to introduce certain changes. The most important was his announcement with regard to the withdrawal of US troops from the ROK. The reason for doing so was understandable in the sense that as a Presidential candidate of a Party (Democratic) which had not been in office for the last two successive terms, he

had to assuage the feelings of a considerable section of Americans who, for different reasons, were advocating the American withdrawal from the ROK. Four basic reasons were advocated by the critics for withdrawal. They pointed out that the US should learn lessons from Indo-China conflict which cost American lives and resources, that Sino-Soviet rivalry has made a fundamental change in the security environment of the area, that the ROK itself was capable of meeting a North Korean threat, and that it was repugnant to American ideals like observance of basic human rights to engage actively in a country which respects these ideals least.

As pointed out earlier, Carter's policy pronouncements regarding Korea evoked sharp reactions from many quarters. Although, seen between the lines, he did not even intend to sever the Korean connection, the critics mistook him of abandoning the ROK. To put it differently, whereas Carter aimed at changing only certain aspects of the American military presence in the ROK, his opponents accused him of undermining the very foundation of such a relationship. Thus it was argued that the withdrawal would provide the impetus for another North Korean attack, that China would have second thoughts about American credibility, and that Japan would be emboldened to undergo a rearmament (both conventional and nuclear) programme, thereby shaking the core of the edifice on which the peace has been built in

the Far East. None of these arguments showed how the withdrawal would make a fundamental alteration in the American commitment to the ROK, unless one assumes that the US overall policy toward the ROK has changed. Nor did any of these arguments explain the change that would result in a situation in which the ROK would be no match to North Korea without the American presence. The latter point is very important in the sense that it was on this ground that finally Carter suspended his withdrawal plan. Except the South Koreans and the American defense personnel very few Americans touched on this aspect. Most of the American scholars pointed out the implications of Carter's policy in the context of either Japan or China or the USSR.

It is quite possible that their line of thinking might have driven the American policy makers to think more in terms of the changes that would take place in the immediate security environment of the ROK and on the basis of that justify the reversal of the earlier plan to withdraw the American ground troops.

Thus, to sum up, seven American Presidents - Truman to Carter - have pledged their support for the security of the ROK. Except for a short period - from the spring of 1949 to the outbreak of the Korean war in June 1950 - there has been a continuous American military presence in Korea since 1945. The US has been discharging the command responsibilities on behalf of the UN in the ROK since 1950.

For more than a quarter of a century - since 1954 - the US and the ROK have been formally bound by a security treaty. Moreover, the ROK was one of the few countries that sent substantial combat soldiers to assist the US during the Vietnam war. Additional military co-operation has taken the form of strong US participation in the ROK's Force Modernisation Plan, the greater integration of the Korean troops with the US military units stationed in the ROK, and finally the presence in the ROK of tactical nuclear weapons as well as air and naval forces. In short, the security relations between the US and the ROK implies, broadly, three things: the conclusion of the Mutual Defense Treaty in 1954 which is still in force; the presence of the American soldiers and weapons on the soil of the ROK; and the massive military sales and assistance that flow from the USA to the ROK.

## II

For the ROK, the alliance with the USA is a major policy concern. Unlike the US which has many such commitments and thus sees the ROK as one of the many countries which fall in its general security framework, the ROK considers the relationship primarily to be the guard against the encroachment of its political system by its communist neighbours.

As regards the immediate neighbours, i.e., the PRC, North Korea, the USSR and Japan, the ROK has varied

threat perceptions. It considered some neighbours, which posed threat, according to it, in the fifties or sixties to be of not the same security concerns in the seventies. The ROK did not perceive the PRC and the USSR to be constituting threats themselves. Nor did it see any reason for both the countries "instigating", as in 1950, North Korea to launch the massive attack against it. It considered them to be providing the official support to North Korea mainly because of the ideological reasons, and thus remaining indifferent to what North Korea did. The ROK was concerned with this indifference on the part of the USSR and China. For, it thought, in an eventual conflict caused by North Korea, both China and the Soviet Union would not come against it (North Korea), thereby giving Kim Il-sung the total independence to do whatever he liked.

Thus North Korea was considered to be the biggest danger to the ROK. Such thinking stemmed from the conflicting ideologies that both the halves of the peninsula were (are) pursuing and mutually unacceptable solutions that they were (are) offering for the unification of the country while at the same time each claiming to represent the nation.

Objectively seen, the South Koreans themselves must have realised that the projected North Korean threat was unreal. For, as we saw in chapter II, many South Korean



scholars have admitted that a North Korean attack was highly unlikely in the face of Sino-Soviet rivalry and the tremendous growth of the ROK's military strength, a fact which even Park Chung-hee highlighted when he said that the ROK was capable of tackling any North Korean punitive action provided it (North Korea) was unaided by either the PRC or the USSR. More importantly, all the comparisons between North and South Korea would be incomplete if one did not take the American presence in the ROK into consideration. The fact remained that US presence, that too equipped with some of the most sophisticated weapons of mass destruction, including the nuclear ones (we saw this in chapter IV), was very much there; and this certainly tilted the military balance in the peninsula in South's favour.

The real reason for projecting the threat from the North should be seen somewhere else. Primarily, it was the reaction against the perceptible change in American policy initiated by Nixon. The Nixon doctrine and Sino-American rapprochement were regarded by the ROK leaders as the beginning of a process which in the end would be tantamount to the sacrifice by the USA of the ROK.

Friendship with China would matter more to the US. In short, the US-ROK connection would be considerably weakened.

To avoid such a scenario, every attempt was made to point out the continued relevance and desirability of close

US-ROK security ties. North Korea's aggressiveness was highly projected. No country other than the US, it was argued, could come to the rescue of the ROK. Even Japan could not play the American role, it was explained, on the grounds of historical memory, constitutional limitations of that country, and above all, the serious implications that an active Japanese involvement in the ROK will have for other Asian nations. Thus, it was the US which alone could play the role of a guardian and thus prevent the outbreak of a war in North East Asia in general and Korea in particular.

Yet another reason for the undue security concern of the ROK was typical of the alliance between a super power and a weaker one. The latter need not stress its weakness to obtain support, but it may exaggerate its frailty to obtain particular forms of aid. Applied in the Korean context, the ROK constantly pleaded for more US security assistance for its military modernisation programme. And it was highly successful as the US, the larger ally, still had (has) a vested interest in maintaining the regime which valued the US connection so much. This was further important when the US decided to reduce the commitment without abandoning it completely. In this situation, as in the similar alliances, the ROK, the smaller ally, pressed for maximum compensation in return for reduced commitment. Therefore, it was no wonder when Park Chung-hee demanded throughout the seventies proportionate US security assistance to the level of reduced US troops' presence.

As a corollary to the above point, it can be argued that the pace of the overall modernization depended upon the level of US involvement in ROK's defense. The lesser was the US involvement, the more diversion of money from the non-military and other developmental projects to the defense establishment. Naturally, the ROK wanted to reverse, or at least halt, this process. So, by picturising a North Korean threat, the ROK aimed to prolong the US physical presence in the country.

The threat perception of the ROK had internal strings attached to it. This was the very nature of the Seoul regime. The army men in civilian clothes rule the country. They do not want to share power with anyone else. Against this, when in 1971 and 1972, the popular discontent rose to a significant height, Park regime wanted to distract public attention and thereby perpetuate authoritarian rule by projecting the outside threat to the very survival of the state.

### III

The interests of four centres of power are enmeshed in the Korean peninsula. They are: China, the Soviet Union, Japan and the United States. Of the four, it is the US which is nearly 6,000 miles away from the peninsula. Therefore, whereas, the other three will always remain concerned with the developments in the peninsula due to geo-political considerations, the presence of the US, physical or otherwise, in the peninsula depends upon the political decision only. As a result, the state (or fate?) of the security relations between the US and the ROK is contingent on the former.

During the seventies, many uncertainties about the American commitment were thought to have appeared. But this was a wrong perception. Such a perception rested on the fact that the reduction or the withdrawal of the American ground troops from the ROK was seen in isolation from other commitments such as the reaffirmation of the clauses in the Mutual Defense Treaty and massive inflow of US security assistance. The seventies witnessed the phenomenal increase in the US assistance, both governmental and private, to the ROK. Highly modernised weapons were pumped into the ROK and quantitatively also they were more than at any other point of time in the past. It is during this decade that the near-integration of US and South Korean military structures took place, and fiercer joint military exercises were performed year by year. Even, while talking of the withdrawal it should be remembered that there were never any proposals to link the withdrawal of ground troops with US air and naval personnel present in the ROK.

This unprecedented rise in the interaction between the two countries in all respects, particularly in the security sphere, let aside the fact (or fear) that the US growing relations with China will be at the cost of the ROK. Indeed, the US actions clearly proved that it could do business with the PRC and the ROK independently. It would not abandon an established friend to win over a former enemy.

The ROK remained and still remains an important country to be of vital concern to the US global security framework. By providing the only mainland bases in the US forward defense line in the Far East (the rest being the islands), the ROK has provided the scope to the US to be present on land nearer to the Soviet border. Besides, as a "Pacific Power", and this she has to remain always as her own security is closely linked to it, the US has evolved an integrated and interdependent defense structure by involving many Pacific Ocean countries, the notable being Japan, the Philippines, the ROK, Australia and New Zealand.

In addition, the US cannot easily belittle its friendship with the ROK which now, at least, is a medium power and continues to move at a rapid pace. Its economic reach is now global, and of growing importance to such regions as the Middle East and South East Asia, not to mention the US (ROK being its twelfth largest trading partner). The ROK maintains the fifth largest army in the world. Its military strength exceeds that of Japan. In fighting capacity, its land forces, as proved in the Vietnam war, may well be compared to that of any other nation in Asia.

Considering all these, the security relations between the ROK and the US will remain, as in the past, very close as long as the present political structure of the ROK dominated by the military continues.

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