Powder Keg: Leave South Korea

By Jonathan T. Helton

***Resolved: The United States federal government should considerably decrease its military commitments***

The U.S. has 28,500 troops stationed in South Korea, supposedly to protect them against a North Korean invasion. Maybe a generation or two ago that was needed, but no longer. South Korea outspends North Korea’s military substantially. They also have a much more sophisticated military. All of this obviates the need for a U.S. presence in South Korea. Keeping troops in South Korea also risks war with North Korea, since Kim Jong Un only threatens the U.S. because we threaten him. Withdrawing troops can defuse the situation and possibly incentivize Kim to denuclearize. All of this reduces the risk of war (both war between NK/SK and attack by NK against the US) and saves the U.S. billions annually.

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S. Korea no longer needs US security, and US strategic interest would be improved if S. Korea were independent 13

U.S., China, North Korea, and South Korea all gain 14

China gains positive influence once the U.S. leaves, increasing likelihood of N. Korea limiting or renouncing nuclear capabilities 14

Removing US troops would remove the main barrier to denuclearization and Korean reunification 14

N. Korea threatens the US but only because we threaten them. Removing US forces would remove the NK threat to the US 15

Without the military commitment to South Korea, we greatly reduce North Korean threats to the United States 15

Removing US involvement in Korea would avoid catastrophic consequences of a nuclear attack on the US homeland 15

Reducing threat to N. Korea = greater willingness of N. Korea to denuclearize 15

US withdrawal from S. Korea greatly reduces risk of N. Korea nuclear attack on US homeland 16

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S. Korea (=ROK, Republic of Korea) is of little value in containing China 18

S. Korea would not want to be an enemy of the PRC 18

S. Korea and Japan don’t get along now—how would they get along in a battle against China? 18

The U.S. still has troops in Japan, enough to deter threats from China 19

A/T “North Korean aggression” 19

S. Korea has a strong military and plenty of resources 19

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U.S. nuclear umbrella (we nuke N. Korea if they nuke S. Korea) means we don’t need US troops in S. Korea 19

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Powder Keg: Leave South Korea

US troops in South Korea are a relic of a war long since over, and a possible trigger of a new one potentially thousands of times more deadly. Please join us in affirming that: The United States Federal Government should considerably decrease its military commitments.

OBSERVATION 1. DEFINITIONS

Considerable

Merriam Webster Online Dictionary copyright 2020. [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/considerably](about:blank)

1**:**worth [consideration](about:blank) **:**[SIGNIFICANT](about:blank)

Military

Merriam Webster Online Dictionary copyright 2020 [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/military](about:blank)

b**:**of or relating to armed forces

Commitment

Merriam Webster Online Dictionary copyright 2020. [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/commitment](about:blank)

c**:**the state or an instance of being obligated or emotionally [impelled](about:blank)

OBSERVATION 1. INHERENCY, the structure of the Status Quo.

28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea.

Emma Chanlett-Avery 2019 (Specialist in Asian Affairs for the Congressional Research Service) 10 December 2019 [Updated June 23, 2020] “U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Issues for Congress” <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11388> (brackets added)

The U.S. military has maintained a large troop presence in South Korea since the end of the Korean War. Currently, approximately 28,500 U.S. troops are based in the ROK [Republic of Korea], predominately Army personnel. Camp Humphreys, which will host most of the troops when completed, is the largest U.S. overseas military base in the world.

OBSERVATION 2. HARMS

HARM 1. Rising Risk of War

A. Stirring the pot. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un threatens us because we threaten him

*Jeff Faux 2018 (founder of the Economic Policy Institute, is currently writing a book about America’s empire and American workers’ future) 6 March 2018 “Why Are US Troops Still in South Korea, Anyway?”* <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/why-are-us-troops-still-in-south-korea-anyway/>

The reason that he threatens us *here* is that we threaten him *there*. American presidents regularly vow to destroy Kim Jong-un’s country. In addition to permanent military bases in the South, they have surrounded him with a menacing armada of missiles, drones, planes, and warships—with regular violations of North Korean airspace at high altitudes. And he is the target of an annual, two-month long US–South Korean military exercise involving tens of thousands of troops practicing how to “decapitate” him.

B. Approaching Sarajevo. Rhetoric and threats over Korea risk pushing us over the brink of war

Yochi Dreazen 2018 (He is an American journalist whose area of expertise is military affairs and national security.) 8 February 2018 “Here’s what war with North Korea would look like” <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/2/7/16974772/north-korea-war-trump-kim-nuclear-weapon>

But here’s the bad news, and the reason hours of conversations with some of the people who know North Korea best have left me feeling profoundly unsettled: It’s easy to imagine a misunderstanding or accidental run-in between the two skittish countries leading to a full-blown war. “I have queasy feeling that we’re in 1914 stumbling towards Sarajevo,” Sen. Angus King (I-ME) said during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing last September, a reference to the assassination of an Austrian archduke that triggered the devastation of World War I. “And what worries me is not an instantaneous nuclear confrontation, but an accidental escalation based upon the rhetoric that’s going back and forth.”

C. The Impact: Korean War II would kill millions

Yochi Dreazen 2018 (American journalist whose area of expertise is military affairs and national security.) 8 February 2018 “Here’s what war with North Korea would look like” <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/2/7/16974772/north-korea-war-trump-kim-nuclear-weapon>

So I’ve spent the past month posing those questions to more than a dozen former Pentagon officials, CIA analysts, US military officers, and think tank experts, as well as to a retired South Korean general who spent his entire professional life preparing to fight the North. They’ve all said variants of the same thing: There is a genuine risk of a war on the Korean Peninsula that would involve the use of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. Several estimated that millions — plural — would die.

HARM 2. Massive cost

A. The Link: US taxpayers pay a net cost of $3 billion annually for the privilege of defending South Korea

Dr. Michael Flynn, Dr. Michael Allen, and Dr. Carla Machain 2019 (Flynn: Associate Professor of Political Science, Kansas State University; Allen: Associate Professor of Political Science, Boise State University; Machain: Carla Martinez Machain is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Kansas State University. Ph.D. in Political Science from Rice University in May 2012) 1 Dec 2019 “Why does the US pay so much for the defense of its allies? 5 questions answered” <https://theconversation.com/why-does-the-us-pay-so-much-for-the-defense-of-its-allies-5-questions-answered-127683>

For example, in 2019, the U.S. and South Korea negotiated an agreement calling for South Korea to contribute approximately $893 million. By comparison, the Department of Defense currently estimates the total cost of maintaining the U.S. presence in South Korea and Japan at $4.5 billion and $5.7 billion, respectively.

B. The Impact: Every increase in the deficit hurts the economy

Dr William Gale and Benjamin Harris 2010. (Gale - PhD in economics, Stanford Univ.; senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. Harris - master’s degree in economics from Cornell Univ and master’s degree in quantitative methods from Columbia Univ) “A VAT for the United States: Part of the Solution” (notes about the date: This article is one of several in the overall publication at this source. The publication date was 2011, but this article was written in 2010) <http://www.taxcareerdigest.com/articles/VATReader.pdf>

But even in the absence of a crisis, sustained deficits have deleterious effects, as they translate into lower national savings, higher interest rates, and increased indebtedness to foreign investors, all of which serve to reduce future national income. Gale and Orszag (2004a) estimate that a 1 percent of GDP increase in the deficit will raise interest rates by 25 to 35 basis points and reduce national saving by 0.5 to 0.8 percentage points of GDP.

OBSERVATION 3. We offer the following PLAN implemented by Congress and the President

1. Withdraw all troops from South Korea by 2022

2. Complete wartime operational control, or OPCON, transfer to South Korea by 2022

3. Funding from general federal revenues.  
4. Enforcement through normal military chain of command.  
5. Timeline: Plan takes effect one day after an affirmative ballot.   
6. All Affirmative speeches may clarify

OBSERVATION 4. ADVANTAGES

ADVANTAGE 1. Comparative advantage of an orderly transition

It’s going to happen eventually, so it’s better to transition away US military support now rather than do it in a panic later when we realize we’re bankrupt and can’t afford it

Doug Bandow 2020 (senior fellow at the Cato Institute; former special assistant to President Ronald Reagan.) “Not Even South Korea Deserves Unlimited Defense From America” 13 Mar 2020 <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/not-even-south-korea-deserves-unlimited-defense-america>

If the Trump administration won’t put Americans first by shedding unnecessary defense burdens, a distant second best is having allies, such as the South, pay more. After all, Washington is essentially bankrupt, set to run trillion dollar deficits for years to come. The numbers will only worsen as the retired population continues to swell. At some point, domestic political support for subsidizing foreign governments that don’t want to pay their way is going to collapse. Better to make an orderly transition now than to be forced to act in the midst of a fiscal crisis. The American‐​South Korean alliance made sense when it was forged. But the world has moved on.

ADVANTAGE 2. Best hope for peace in Korea

Withdrawal of US forces would remove barriers to peace on the Korean peninsula

Dr. Markus Bell and Geoffrey Fattig 2018 (Bell is an anthropologist and a lecturer in the University of Sheffield’s School of East Asian Studies. Fattig is an independent research analyst based in Seoul. He has a master’s degree in International Affairs from UC San Diego and previously worked as a speechwriter for the U.S. Department of State.) 25 June 2018 “Exit Strategy: Will U.S. Troops Leave South Korea?” <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2018/06/25/exit_strategy_will_us_troops_leave_south_korea_113555.html>

Likely without his realising it, Trump and his “America First” approach – [historically](https://fpif.org/the-case-for-america-first-on-the-korean-peninsula/) associated with an isolationist foreign policy stance in US politics – may be the key to securing peaceful relations on the Korean Peninsula and the broader region of Northeast Asia. Removing the American military threat to North Korea would not only undermine the regime’s justification for developing nuclear weapons, but also likely inspire China to take a more active role in pushing for North Korea’s denuclearisation. Given China’s central importance to the North Korean economy, any credible attempt to denuclearise the country will by necessity require the active and unwavering support of the Chinese leadership. Previously, Beijing has grudgingly tolerated North Korea’s nuclear weapons program as the price necessary to ensure it has a stable buffer between the US military and its north-eastern border. Those calculations would surely change with the withdrawal of American forces, particularly if North Korea’s ongoing possession of nuclear weapons strengthened the position of those in [Japan](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/why-south-kore-japan-not-go-nuclear) who would like to see the country embark on its own nuclear program.

ADVANTAGE 3. Reduced nuclear threat to the US homeland

North Korea’s nuclear threat to the United States goes away when we remove US forces from Korea

Doug Bandow 2016 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute and a former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan. ) “Leaving Korea Will Unburden U.S. Troops and Help South Korea Grow Up“ 6 July 2016 <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/leaving-korea-will-unburden-us-troops-help-south-korea-grow>

Even more dramatic have been tests, most recently in April, on a long‐​range missile capable of hitting North America. The weapon probably isn’t capable of targeting anything in particular, but further tests likely will improve its accuracy. This work has no value for a conflict on the peninsula or even nearby. It is useful only for threatening the United States. At the same time the DPRK is thought to be expanding its nuclear capabilities. The Institute for Science and International Security recently [estimated](http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/Pu_HEU_and_tritium_production_at_Yongbyon_June_14_2016_FINAL.pdf) North Korea’s arsenal at thirteen to twenty‐​one weapons. It may be adding four to six weapons a year. Yet North Korea’s threats do not occur in a vacuum. Pyongyang is targeting America with weapons as well as rhetoric because America is over there. Kim does not spend his time denouncing Mexico or threatening to turn Toronto into a lake of fire. He does not vilify Europe at every opportunity. Brazil and Nigeria do not make Kim’s enemy list. If Washington were not threatening his nation with war, backed by forces based only a few miles south of his country and around the region, he wouldn’t waste his breath on America. Which creates yet another reason for the United States to bring home its forces.

2A Evidence: Leave South Korea

OPENING QUOTES / AFF PHILOSOPHY

Countries like S. Korea ought to fend for themselves

Doug Bandow 2019 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute; former Special Assistant to President Reagan) 19 October 2019 “Trump Should Reassess America’s Commitment to South Korea” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/trump-should-reassess-americas-commitment-south-korea>

However, American policy should not be determined by allied upset. Other nations should bear the chief responsibility for their own security. And President Trump should focus on America’s defense. Which should include asking, why is the U.S. making itself a target of a nuclear North Korea?

Commitment to S. Korea isn’t worth it because of the nuclear attack risk to the USA

Doug Bandow 2019 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute; former Special Assistant to President Reagan) 19 October 2019 “Trump Should Reassess America’s Commitment to South Korea” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/trump-should-reassess-americas-commitment-south-korea>

Moreover, even if “abandonment” is undesirable, it must be judged compared to what? Is it better to maintain a commitment that could result in the destruction of multiple American cities? The U.S. presence is supposed to be a means to defend America, not an end in itself. Washington should end any alliance or deployment that endangers this nation.

MINOR REPAIR RESPONSES

A/T “Just have S. Korea pay more” – Bad idea: Harms the relationship with S. Korea. Letting them become more independent is better

Jessica Lee 2019 (Senior Research Fellow at the Quincy Institute. She is an expert on East Asia and a former congressional staff member. She graduated from Wellesley and Harvard.) November 2019 “The U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Toward a Relationship of Equals” <https://quincyinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/QUINCY-BRIEF-NO.-3-NOVEMBER-2019-JESSICA-LEE.pdf>

Most important, it is in the United States’ strategic interest that prosperous countries such as South Korea—a country that has transformed itself from an international aid recipient to an aid donor in 60 years—become security independent. Washington should welcome the prospect of an ally whose security no longer falls on the shoulders of the United States. It made sense for the United States to be the principal partner in the post–World War II relationship, when Korea was freed from Japanese colonialism but suffered the ravages of the Korean War, but times have changed. Further, studies show that lengthy military occupation can elicit nationalist sentiment and open resentment. Demanding an unreasonable increase in our costsharing agreement harms long-term U.S. interests. Weakening Washington’s relationship with Seoul makes South Korea less secure and creates a greater burden for Americans to shoulder in the long run.

INHERENCY

Quantification and details of US forces in S. Korea

Reuters 2019 (Reuters, the news and media division of Thomson Reuters, is the world’s largest international multimedia news provider.) 12 November 2019 “Factbox: U.S. and South Korea's security arrangement, cost of troops” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-usa-military-factbox/factbox-u-s-and-south-koreas-security-arrangement-cost-of-troops-idUSKBN1XN09I>

U.S. Forces Korea operates about 90 combat planes, 40 attack helicopters and about 60 Patriot missile launchers, according to South Korea’s Defense White Paper issued in December. According to U.S. Forces Korea’s latest compiled weekly data, the Army had about 19,500 soldiers stationed in South Korea, the Air Force had about 7,800 airmen and women, the Navy had about 350 sailors, and the Marine Corps had about 120 Marines.

Cost won’t be solved by asking S. Korea to pay more: They won’t pay more for U.S. support

Doug Bandow 2020 (He is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. A former special assistant to President Ronald Reagan.) 13 March 2020 “Not Even South Korea Deserves Unlimited Defense From America” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/not-even-south-korea-deserves-unlimited-defense-america>

The furlough threat has not impressed Seoul. A recent poll found that just 4 percent of South Koreans would pay billions more for America’s support. A majority suggested cutting the number of Americans stationed in South Korea if an agreement was not reached.

S. Korea = 3rd largest foreign presence of U.S. troops, with 28,500 stationed there

Reuters 2019 (Reuters, the news and media division of Thomson Reuters, is the world’s largest international multimedia news provider) 12 November 2019 “Factbox: U.S. and South Korea's security arrangement, cost of troops” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-usa-military-factbox/factbox-u-s-and-south-koreas-security-arrangement-cost-of-troops-idUSKBN1XN09I>

There are about 28,500 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea, according to South Korea’s Ministry of National Defense. It is the third-largest presence of U.S. troops outside the continental United States after Japan and Germany, according to data from the U.S. Defense Manpower Data Center.

OPCON transfer advocated by S.K. Pres. Moon but implementation is dragging

Emma Chanlett-Avery 2019 (Specialist in Asian Affairs for the Congressional Research Service) 10 December 2019 [Updated June 23, 2020] “U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Issues for Congress” (brackets added) <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11388>

[South Korean] President Moon aims to complete the process before his term expires in May 2022. The two sides established conditions and benchmarks to demonstrate that the ROK can assume wartime OPCON, including improved ROK capabilities to lead combined forces and counter the DPRK nuclear and missile threat, and a security environment on the Peninsula conducive to a transfer. Significant progress has been made on some, but some areas remain slower to follow. Some also point to the challenge of imposing a political deadline on a complex process of technically assessing capabilities and gauging security conditions.

U.S. troops are staying in S. Korea indefinitely

Doug Bandow 2020 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute. A former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 6 January 2020 “Why President Trump should trade U.S. troops in Korea for denuclearization” (ellipses in original) <https://www.nknews.org/2020/01/why-president-trump-should-trade-u-s-troops-in-korea-for-denuclearization/>

Geopolitical circumstances don’t even seem to come into it. In a recent interview the U.S. ambassador to South Korea, Harry Harris, declared that “There is no contemplation of U.S. forces leaving the Korean Peninsula … as an outcome of relationships with North Korea.” American units are to stay in Korea apparently till the end of time, even if the North Korean lion lies down with the South Korean lamb.

SQ cannot achieve denuclearization of N. Korea without war—and that option is too costly

Doug Bandow 2019 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute. He is a former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 19 October 2019 “Trump Should Reassess America’s Commitment to South Korea” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/trump-should-reassess-americas-commitment-south-korea>

Unfortunately, there is no way to eliminate the North’s nuclear arsenal short of war, which also would be too high a price to pay. Sanctions are a useful tool to pressure the North but alone are insufficient to force denuclearization. Diplomacy might mitigate North Korean behavior but is unlikely to cause Pyongyang to abandon weapons which took so much effort to create. Kim certainly won’t do so without serious compensation. So far the president has offered nothing immediate (sanctions relief) or real (more than promised friendship) in exchange for the only deterrent that works against the globe’s superpower. After all, noted Robert Kelly of Pusan National University: “the history of U.S. behavior toward rogue states akin to North Korea, particularly toward Libya and Iran suggests that Washington will not keep its promises.” Kim would be a fool to give away his nukes for nothing tangible, and he is not a fool.

SQ negotiations with N. Korea over denuclearization won’t work. Lessons learned from the Libya Model

Doug Bandow 2020 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute; former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 6 January 2020 “Why President Trump should trade U.S. troops in Korea for denuclearization” <https://www.nknews.org/2020/01/why-president-trump-should-trade-u-s-troops-in-korea-for-denuclearization/>

Convincing the Kims to yield their nuclear program seemed an especially forlorn hope once Washington began taking advantage of its “unipolar moment” to target members of the Axis of Evil and others: Panama, Haiti, Somalia, Serbia, Iraq (twice!), Afghanistan, Yemen, and most dramatically Libya. In the latter case the U.S. and Europe convinced Muammar Gaddafi abandon his missile and nuclear programs in return for good relations.

For a time he enjoyed the West’s favor, even hosting U.S. Senators Graham, John McCain, and Joseph Lieberman for a friendly visit in which they discussed the possibility of rewarding Tripoli for its counter-terrorism cooperation. However, the moment he was vulnerable the colonel’s sunshine friends took advantage of the opportunity to oust him. He eventually was captured, brutalized, and killed by Libyan insurgents. Among the biggest American cheerleaders for war were Graham and McCain. Hence the North’s sensitivity to the “Libya model” which former National Security Adviser John Bolton talked about. Friendly gestures are not enough to convince Pyongyang’s leaders of Washington’s benign intentions.

**[END QUOTE. He goes on later in the same article to write QUOTE:]**

Against a nuclear-armed North even what began as a conventional conflict would inevitably threaten to escalate. In 1950 Chinese intervention saved the North. That wouldn’t happen again. Pyongyang would face inevitable defeat if war erupted. In which case, Kim would have every incentive to threaten to use his nukes if the U.S. and ROK forces prepared to overrun the DPRK. With Gaddafi’s fate in mind Kim would have little reason not to unleash hell if the allies moved north. Would any American president risk the destruction of U.S. cities to complete the conquest of North Korea?

A/T “Trump will solve N. Korea threat / denuclearization” – Not with all the confusing policies he’s doing

Dr. Kee Park and Christine Ahn 2020 (**Park** is the Director of North Korea Program at the Korean American Medical Association. Since 2007, he has visited North Korea over 20 times to support the North Korean doctors. He is a member of the faculty at Harvard Medical School. **Ahn** is the Founder and Executive Director of Women Cross DMZ, a global movement of women mobilizing to end the Korean War) 23 April 2020 “South Korea is a model for combatting COVID-19; it should now take the lead in diplomacy with North Korea” <https://quincyinst.org/2020/04/23/south-korea-is-a-model-for-combatting-covid-19-it-should-now-take-the-lead-in-diplomacy-with-north-korea/>

The Trump administration’s approach to North Korea has been characterized by the president developing a personal relationship with Kim Jong Un, while imposing ever-stricter sanctions and continuing to hold joint military exercises with South Korea. This has failed to move the needle on North Korea’s nuclear weapons arsenal. Pyongyang continues to test weapons — even in the midst of a global pandemic — and shows no signs of wanting to engage with Washington.

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

Conventional Korean War II = massive human cost, trillions of dollars and radiological disaster

[*Jeremy Beaven*](https://twitter.com/jeremy_beaven) 2018 (*Marine Corps officer and a student at the U.S. Naval War College.) 17 May 2018 “North Korea: Time for a "Normal" Strategy?”* <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2018/5/17/north-korea-time-for-a-normal-strategy>

Until very recently the Trump Administration has continually increased the rhetoric and pressure on the regime. North Korea’s November 2017 reappearance on the list of state sponsors of terrorism prevents it from receiving U.S. foreign aid, bans defense exports and sales, and permits the U.S. to freeze the assets of those who trade with the DPRK. In addition to these policy measures, President Trump has often taken a personal and antagonistic approach towards Kim Jong Un. The president has used social media to threaten North Korea and publicly bestowed monikers like “madman,” “sick puppy,” and “Little Rocket Man” on the despotic leader. Unsurprisingly, Kim Jong Un has responded in kind while decrying President Trump as the “rabid man in the White House.” This bellicosity only inflames global tension, unnecessarily disquiets allies, and threatens the potential success of on-going diplomatic efforts. The sophomoric approach to foreign policy also belies the enormous tragedy that would result should violence erupt on the peninsula. Estimates of a conventional war include almost one million military and civilian casualties, $1 trillion in military operations and reconstruction, and potentially devastating environmental effects caused by damage to North Korea’s nuclear complex or South Korea’s nuclear reactors. These numbers are irrespective of the human and economic costs associated with the refugee crisis sure to unfold.

Deficits harm the economy

William G. Gale 2019 (Arjay and Frances Miller Chair in Federal Economic Policy and a senior fellow in the Economic Studies Program at the Brookings Institution. Co-director of the Tax Policy Center, a joint venture of the Brookings Institution and the Urban Institute) 2 May 2019 “Five myths about federal debt” <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/five-myths-about-federal-debt/>

Yet in a recent [University of Chicago survey](http://www.igmchicago.org/surveys/modern-monetary-theory) of prominent economists, not one agreed that a country that issues debt in its own currency does not have to worry about deficits. Future debt will stem largely from anemic revenue growth and increased expenditures on an aging population. The result will [reduce future national saving](https://www.ntanet.org/NTJ/56/3/ntj-v56n03p463-85-economic-effects-sustained-budget.pdf?v=%CE%B1&r=20009616630819171) — the sum of saving by the private and public sectors — and drag down future national income. This could happen through [higher interest rates](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2004/06/2004b_bpea_gale.pdf), which choke off investment and reduce production and income. Or it could happen through [greater borrowing](http://cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/attachments/45140-NSPDI_workingPaper.pdf) from abroad, which would allow us to maintain production but siphon off increasing resources to debt payments. Estimates by the [Congressional Budget Office](http://cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/attachments/45140-NSPDI_workingPaper.pdf) and others indicate that these effects could be substantial. Politically, sustained deficits and rising long-term debt make it harder to garner support for new policies or to address the next recession, war or emergency.

Washington harms peace talks between the two Koreas: SQ sadly values US influence over reducing the risk of nuclear war

*Jeff Faux 2018 (He is the founder of the Economic Policy Institute) 6 March 2018 “Why Are US Troops Still in South Korea, Anyway?”* <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/why-are-us-troops-still-in-south-korea-anyway/>

One clue as to why our troops are still garrisoned in South Korea lies in the panic that spread through the US foreign-policy establishment when South and North Korea recently began their own bilateral talks and agreed to march into the 2018 Olympics under one flag. Instead of seeing this as a positive step toward peace, American leaders—Democrats as well as Republicans—were alarmed that it was driving a “wedge” between the United States and South Korea. By putting pressure on Washington to negotiate, reported the Times, “the breach between South Korea and the United States could become a chasm.” Thus, from Washington’s perspective, avoiding nuclear war is less a priority than maintaining its influence in that part of the world. Peace between North and South would make the average American safer and less burdened with the cost of deploying all those troops, bombers, missiles, drones, and warships. However, the average American general, military contractor, and globe-hopping pundit would be a smaller—and less well-paid—fish in the East Asian political pond.

Korea on the brink of nuclear war now

*Jeff Faux 2018 (founder of the Economic Policy) 6 March 2018 “Why Are US Troops Still in South Korea, Anyway?”* <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/why-are-us-troops-still-in-south-korea-anyway/>

We’re not talking here about some antiseptic surgical drone operation. As Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis wrote two Democratic congressmen last October, “The only way to ‘locate and destroy—with complete certainty—all components of North Korea’s nuclear weapons programs’ is through a ground invasion.” Since China would clearly not accept an occupying US force across its border, such an effort by Trump to clean out Kim’s missiles could quickly topple the dominos into a Korean War Redux—this time with three nuclear-armed combatants.

Cooler heads may in the end prevail. But with both sides’ front-line military on hair trigger alert, the chance of war by accident or mistake has also escalated. A high-level North Korean defector told a congressional committee last November that their officers “are trained to press the button without any further instructions from the general command if something happens.”

US and N. Korea on the brink of war – even an accidental incident could set it off

Yochi Dreazen 2018 (American journalist whose area of expertise is military affairs and national security.) 8 February 2018 “Here’s what war with North Korea would look like” <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/2/7/16974772/north-korea-war-trump-kim-nuclear-weapon>

Maybe next week Kim will test-fire a missile that flies too close to Guam or Hawaii and Trump will decide enough is enough. Or maybe a US ship will accidentally drift into North Korean waters and Kim’s navy will open fire. With no lines of communication, a simple mistake could set off a cascading series of responses that ultimately lead to all-out war. In a situation this combustible, there are an enormous number of moves — some intentional, some accidental — that could light the match.

S. Korea loses sovereignty and the U.S. risks war: A lose-lose situation

Doug Bandow 2020 (senior fellow at the Cato Institute; former special assistant to President Ronald Reagan.) 13 March 2020 “Not Even South Korea Deserves Unlimited Defense From America” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/not-even-south-korea-deserves-unlimited-defense-america>

The South’s military was better trained, equipped, and supported. Only in quantity of men and materiel did North Korea retain a lead. That, however, was a matter of choice. The ROK could afford to match the North in any way it thought necessary. But doing so wasn’t necessary since Seoul could count on Washington to do the dirty work in another big war. Of course, South Koreans enjoy their good deal: the globe’s superpower promises to go to war on their behalf, even insisting it will use nuclear weapons if necessary. Seoul’s job? Agree to be defended. Not exactly a “mutual” defense treaty, as claimed. Indeed, Washington treats the South like a child. It retains operational control of the South Korean military in wartime, an extraordinary concession of sovereignty.

U.S. policy harms S. Korea’s peace initiatives and diplomacy with N. Korea

Dr. Kee Park and Christine Ahn 2020 (**Park** is the Director of North Korea Program at the Korean American Medical Association. Since 2007, he has visited North Korea over 20 times to support the North Korean doctors. He is a member of the faculty at Harvard Medical School. **Ahn** is the Founder and Executive Director of Women Cross DMZ, a global movement of women mobilizing to end the Korean War, reunite families, and ensure women’s leadership in peace building) 23 April 2020 “South Korea is a model for combatting COVID-19; it should now take the lead in diplomacy with North Korea” <https://quincyinst.org/2020/04/23/south-korea-is-a-model-for-combatting-covid-19-it-should-now-take-the-lead-in-diplomacy-with-north-korea/>

From the beginning of his presidency, Moon — a human rights lawyer and former soldier who served in the DMZ — has made more headway than past South Korean leaders in improving inter-Korean relations. Five months after signing the Panmunjom Declaration in April 2018, Moon and Kim met in Pyongyang for a second summit and signed an inter-Korean military agreement that set forth a demilitarization process, including disarming soldiers in the Joint Security Area and demining portions of the DMZ. South Korea took concrete steps to revive inter-Korean cooperation, such as establishing a diplomatic compound in Kaesong and seeking to link the inter-Korean railroad at Dorasan Station at the DMZ. Unfortunately, Moon’s pro-peace diplomacy with North Korea fell victim to Washington’s “maximum pressure” campaign on North Korea. In an October 2018 call to South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-Hwa, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo rebuked Seoul for moving too fast with Pyongyang and failing to move in lock step with Washington on denuclearization. When asked about South Korea’s possible lifting of sanctions on North Korea, President Trump told reporters, “They won’t do that without our approval. They do nothing without our approval.”

South Korea is not covering the cost of U.S. defense—we are losing money

Major Christopher Lee 2014 (active duty Major in the U.S. Army. A graduate of West Point, he has served for eight years as an intelligence officer. He is currently a Foreign Area Officer for the Northeast Asia region and a graduate student at Columbia University) 24 July 2014 “TIME FOR U.S. FORCES TO LEAVE SOUTH KOREA” <https://warontherocks.com/2014/07/time-for-u-s-forces-to-leave-south-korea/>

Still, the ultimate gains of the OPCON transfer outweigh most contentions that the handover to a supposedly ill-prepared South Korea is dangerous. First, as evidenced by the minimal financial support it provides to offset the cost of stationing U.S. forces in the peninsula, South Korea has done more damage than good to the U.S. According to [the Senate Armed Services Committee report](http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41481.pdf), U.S. military non-personnel costs in South Korea totaled about $1.1 billion in 2012, while Korean payments totaled $765 million. Simply put, South Korean payments have not kept pace with rising U.S. costs.

Drain on taxpayers

Major Christopher Lee 2014 (active duty Major in the U.S. Army. A graduate of West Point, he has served for eight years as an intelligence officer. He is currently a Foreign Area Officer for the Northeast Asia region and a graduate student at Columbia University) 24 July 2014 “TIME FOR U.S. FORCES TO LEAVE SOUTH KOREA” <https://warontherocks.com/2014/07/time-for-u-s-forces-to-leave-south-korea/>

I advocate the establishment of a firm transfer date. Obama must take a resolved stand on this matter and press Park to select an exact date to take the reins of her country’s own defense. It is time for the U.S. to end its status quo policy and force the handover. U.S. conventional forces no longer hold the same tactical value as they did during the Cold War, and America’s fragile economy cannot continue to withstand the financial drain. South Korean policymakers’ claim that American forces on the ground serve as a valuable geopolitical asset is obsolete; rather, America’s continued presence in South Korea is nothing more than a drain on U.S. taxpayers and a waste of valuable resources.

SOLVENCY / ADVOCACY / ADVANTAGES

Shrinks defense spending

Doug Bandow 2016 (senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties. He worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan; JD from Stanford Univ.) 11 July 2016 “Exit the Korean Imbroglio to Solve the North Korean Problem” <https://www.cato.org/blog/exit-korean-imbroglio-solve-north-korean-problem>

The justification for U.S. troops in Korea disappeared decades ago. Bringing them home and shrinking America’s military accordingly would ease an increasingly unaffordable defense burden.

OPCON advocacy: Transfer proposed by Rumsfeld in 2003

Major Christopher Lee 2014 (active duty Major in the U.S. Army. A graduate of West Point, he has served for eight years as an intelligence officer. He is currently a Foreign Area Officer for the Northeast Asia region and a graduate student at Columbia Univ.) 24 July 2014 “TIME FOR U.S. FORCES TO LEAVE SOUTH KOREA” <https://warontherocks.com/2014/07/time-for-u-s-forces-to-leave-south-korea/>

The transfer of the wartime OPCON was initially proposed in January 2003 by then-U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, just after a left-wing Roh Moo-Hyun ascended to the presidential office on an anti-American platform. Rumsfeld was fighting the Global War on Terror and required resources elsewhere. He said that USFK were too fixed to the peninsula. Rumsfeld immediately “authorized a realignment program to reduce and relocate U.S. forces” and began further talks of the handover.

S. Korea no longer needs US security, and US strategic interest would be improved if S. Korea were independent

Jessica Lee 2019 (Senior Research Fellow at the Quincy Institute. She is an expert on East Asia and a former congressional staff member. She graduated from Wellesley and Harvard.) November 2019 “The U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Toward a Relationship of Equals” <https://quincyinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/QUINCY-BRIEF-NO.-3-NOVEMBER-2019-JESSICA-LEE.pdf>

Most important, it is in the United States’ strategic interest that prosperous countries such as South Korea—a country that has transformed itself from an international aid recipient to an aid donor in 60 years—become security independent. Washington should welcome the prospect of an ally whose security no longer falls on the shoulders of the United States. It made sense for the United States to be the principal partner in the post–World War II relationship, when Korea was freed from Japanese colonialism but suffered the ravages of the Korean War, but times have changed. Further, studies show that lengthy military occupation can elicit nationalist sentiment and open resentment.

U.S., China, North Korea, and South Korea all gain

Dr. Markus Bell and Geoffrey Fattig 2018 (Bell is an anthropologist and a lecturer in the University of Sheffield’s School of East Asian Studies. Fattig is an independent research analyst based in Seoul. He has a master’s degree in International Affairs from UC San Diego and previously worked as a speechwriter for the U.S. Department of State.) 25 June 2018 “Exit Strategy: Will U.S. Troops Leave South Korea?” <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2018/06/25/exit_strategy_will_us_troops_leave_south_korea_113555.html>

While predictably there has been [scepticism](http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/01/u-s-soldiers-might-be-stuck-in-korea-forever/" \t "_blank) about the possibility of American troops withdrawing from Korea,

such an outcome should not discounted. For perhaps the first time, the leaders of the four major players in Korean affairs – the U.S., China, and North and South Korea – all seem to share an interest in removing the U.S. military from the Korean Peninsula.

China gains positive influence once the U.S. leaves, increasing likelihood of N. Korea limiting or renouncing nuclear capabilities

Doug Bandow 2016 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute and a former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 6 July 2016 “Leaving Korea Will Unburden U.S. Troops and Help South Korea Grow Up” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/leaving-korea-will-unburden-us-troops-help-south-korea-grow-16866>

This raises the obvious question whether Pyongyang would behave so provocatively if America was not on the scene. No one should expect a kinder, gentler Kim to emerge. But his “byungjin” policy of pursuing both nuclear weapons and economic growth faces a severe challenge, especially since sanctions continue to limit the DPRK’s development. With the United States far away he would have more reason to listen to China, which long has advised more reforms and fewer nukes. He also might be more amenable to negotiate limits on his missile and nuclear activities, if not give up the capabilities entirely. Since nothing else has worked, an American withdrawal would be a useful change in strategy.

Removing US troops would remove the main barrier to denuclearization and Korean reunification

Dr. Markus Bell and Geoffrey Fattig 2018 (Bell is an anthropologist and a lecturer in the University of Sheffield’s School of East Asian Studies. Fattig is an independent research analyst based in Seoul. He has a master’s degree in International Affairs from UC San Diego and previously worked as a speechwriter for the U.S. Department of State.) 25 June 2018 “Exit Strategy: Will U.S. Troops Leave South Korea?” <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2018/06/25/exit_strategy_will_us_troops_leave_south_korea_113555.html> (brackets added)

For its part, the North Korean leadership would clearly welcome the departure of U.S. troops, which it views as the main stumbling block towards Korean reunification, and is likely to offer [S. Korean President] Moon all the positive optics he requires to see it happen. These would likely take the form of further symbolic actions towards denuclearisation, such as the destruction of the Punggye-ri nuclear test site in May.

N. Korea threatens the US but only because we threaten them. Removing US forces would remove the NK threat to the US

Doug Bandow 2016 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute and a former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 6 July 2016 “Leaving Korea Will Unburden U.S. Troops and Help South Korea Grow Up” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/leaving-korea-will-unburden-us-troops-help-south-korea-grow-16866>

For instance, Kim Jong-un was recently quoted expressing his “great satisfaction” with the test of the midrange Musudan missile, which offers a “powerful means of attack” to help protect the DPRK from “hostile forces,” including the United States. As a result, he explained, “We have the sure capability to attack in an overall and practical way the Americans in the Pacific operation theater,” apparently meaning to target Washington’s many bases. Even more dramatic have been tests, most recently in April, on a long-range missile capable of hitting North America. The weapon probably isn’t capable of targeting anything in particular, but further tests likely will improve its accuracy. This work has no value for a conflict on the peninsula or even nearby. It is useful only for threatening the United States. Yet North Korea’s threats do not occur in a vacuum. Pyongyang is targeting America with weapons as well as rhetoric because America is over there. Kim does not spend his time denouncing Mexico or threatening to turn Toronto into a lake of fire. He does not vilify Europe at every opportunity. Brazil and Nigeria do not make Kim’s enemy list. If Washington were not threatening his nation with war, backed by forces based only a few miles south of his country and around the region, he wouldn’t waste his breath on America. Which creates yet another reason for the United States to bring home its forces.

Without the military commitment to South Korea, we greatly reduce North Korean threats to the United States

Doug Bandow 2016 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute and a former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan. ) “Leaving Korea Will Unburden U.S. Troops and Help South Korea Grow Up” 6 July 2016 <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/leaving-korea-will-unburden-us-troops-help-south-korea-grow>

Absent its military commitment to the Republic of Korea, America would be of no concern to the latest Kim scion to rule over the impoverished land to the north. As it is, scarcely a week goes by without a new insult or threat emanating from Pyongyang directed at America. For instance, Kim Jong‐​un was recently quoted [expressing](https://nkleadershipwatch.wordpress.com/2016/06/22/kim-jong-un-attends-and-guides-irbm-hwasong-10-missile-test/) his “great satisfaction” with the test of the midrange Musudan missile, which offers a “powerful means of attack” to help protect the DPRK from “hostile forces,” including the United States. As a result, he explained, “We have the sure capability to attack in an overall and practical way the Americans in the Pacific operation theater,” apparently meaning to target Washington’s many bases.

Removing US involvement in Korea would avoid catastrophic consequences of a nuclear attack on the US homeland

Doug Bandow 2020 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute. A former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 6 January 2020 “Why President Trump should trade U.S. troops in Korea for denuclearization” <https://www.nknews.org/2020/01/why-president-trump-should-trade-u-s-troops-in-korea-for-denuclearization/>

Opening the homeland to nuclear attack would risk truly catastrophic consequences. In contrast, absent U.S. involvement, war on the peninsula, though a humanitarian tragedy and regional disaster, would leave America essentially unmolested.

Reducing threat to N. Korea = greater willingness of N. Korea to denuclearize

*Jeff Faux 2018 (founder of the Economic Policy Institute, is currently writing a book about America’s empire and American workers’ future) 6 March 2018 “Why Are US Troops Still in South Korea, Anyway?”* <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/why-are-us-troops-still-in-south-korea-anyway/>

After a meeting with Kim in Pyongyang on March 5, South Korean envoys reported that “the North Korean side clearly stated its willingness to denuclearize. It made it clear that it would have no reason to keep nuclear weapons if the military threat to the North was eliminated and its security guaranteed.”

US withdrawal from S. Korea greatly reduces risk of N. Korea nuclear attack on US homeland

Doug Bandow 2020 (senior fellow at the Cato Institute; former special assistant to President Ronald Reagan.) 13 March 2020 “Not Even South Korea Deserves Unlimited Defense From America” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/not-even-south-korea-deserves-unlimited-defense-america>

Most importantly, America’s tripwire ensures that it will become involved in any conflict. As North Korea develops nuclear weapons and long‐​range missiles, the cost of this arrangement grows exponentially. In March, Esper told Congress that U.S. intelligence believed the North could target Hawaii, threatening “our homeland with nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities.” Esper advocated “a force posture to deter and defend against these threats, as well as Pyongyang’s extensive conventional forces.” Much better, however, would be withdrawal, since the DPRK targets America only because it’s threatening the North. North Korea isn’t suicidal and won’t attack America—unless the U.S. is threatening the Kim regime with destruction. And nothing on the peninsula is worth risking the American homeland.

Removing the threat of war pushes North Korea towards denuclearization

Dr. Markus Bell and Geoffrey Fattig 2018 (Bell is an anthropologist and a lecturer in the University of Sheffield’s School of East Asian Studies. Fattig is an independent research analyst based in Seoul. He has a master’s degree in International Affairs from UC San Diego and previously worked as a speechwriter for the U.S. Dept of State.) 25 June 2018 “Exit Strategy: Will U.S. Troops Leave South Korea?” <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2018/06/25/exit_strategy_will_us_troops_leave_south_korea_113555.html>

Removing the American military threat to North Korea would not only undermine the regime’s justification for developing nuclear weapons, but also likely inspire China to take a more active role in pushing for North Korea’s denuclearisation.

A/T “Withdrawal as a bargaining chip” – Phase in a pullout anyway, since denuclearization is unlikely

Doug Bandow 2019 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute. He is a former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan.) 19 October 2019 “Trump Should Reassess America’s Commitment to South Korea” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/trump-should-reassess-americas-commitment-south-korea>

So long as productive negotiations are underway, withdrawal could be delayed and offered as an inducement for disarmament. However, the unlikely prospect of full denuclearization should not be allowed to prevent a conventional withdrawal that is long overdue. A pull‐​out should be phased in any case and could begin with the prospect of full withdrawal presented as an inducement.

DISAD RESPONSES

A/T “S. Korea can’t defend itself”

S. Korea has a bigger army than the USA does!

Taoka Shunji 2019 (former defense writer of the Asahi Shinbun, former Senior Fellow of CSIS, former Guest Fellow of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) 15 Nov 2019 “Withdrawal of U.S. Forces from South Korea is Long Overdue: Examining the Military Balance on the Korean Peninsula” <https://apjjf.org/2019/22/Taoka.html>

In September, 2018, the U.S. Defense Department reported troop strength at 17,200 Army and 8,100 Air Force for a total of 25,800. This compares to a total of 625,000 South Korean forces as reported in the 2019 issue of *Military Balance* published annually by the U.K.’s International Institute for Strategic Studies. They include 490,000 Army, 65,000 Air Force and 70, 000 Navy. Thus, the South Korean Army outnumbers the entire U.S. Army worldwide of 476,200. The 17,200 U.S. Army troops in South Korea are one twenty-ninth the size of the South Korean Army.

S. Korea enjoys a massive economic advantage over the North

Doug Bandow 2019 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute. He is a former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan.) 19 October 2019 “Trump Should Reassess America’s Commitment to South Korea” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/trump-should-reassess-americas-commitment-south-korea>

However, the balance of power in the region long ago shifted. By the 1960s the ROK took off economically and began moving past the North. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and reforms in the People’s Republic of China, the DPRK found itself effectively bereft of allies. Around the same time, South Korea moved to democracy, completing its edge over the North. Today the South enjoys an economy estimated at 54 times the size of the DPRK’s.

South Korea has a military edge and can defend itself

Major Christopher Lee 2014 (active duty Major in the U.S. Army. A graduate of West Point, he has served for eight years as an intelligence officer. He is currently a Foreign Area Officer for the Northeast Asia region.) 24 July 2014 “TIME FOR U.S. FORCES TO LEAVE SOUTH KOREA” <https://warontherocks.com/2014/07/time-for-u-s-forces-to-leave-south-korea/>

Although the mutual defense treaty has secured the alliance for nearly six decades, transformations from both sides in the last decade suggest that a fundamental change is overdue. Based on new fiscal realities and Seoul’s proven ability to defend its national borders, the U.S. government should immediately conduct the transfer of the wartime operational control (OPCON) to South Korea. The country’s robust military force and its ongoing procurement of advanced military systems, combined with its first-rate economy, afford South Korea the ability to defend itself from most aggressors without substantial involvement of American conventional forces. The OPCON transfer would not change the security guarantee of extended deterrence under the United States’ nuclear umbrella. In addition to the transfer, President Obama should turn away from his status quo approach and implement a new security alliance toward South Korea—one that strongly cultivates an autonomous military without extended assistance from the United States.

S. Korea would win against North Korea

*Jeff Faux 2018 (founder of the Economic Policy Institute) 6 March 2018 “Why Are US Troops Still in South Korea, Anyway?”* <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/why-are-us-troops-still-in-south-korea-anyway/>

What about a conventional invasion from the North? After the Korean War cease-fire in 1953, this was a legitimate worry. North Korea was larger and more industrialized than the mostly rural south. But today, South Korea has roughly 50 times the GNP of the north, is a manufacturing powerhouse, and it spends almost five times as much on its military. The uniformed North Korean army is numerically superior but lacks the armament and logistic technology of the South. Kim’s air force and navy are even more obsolete and no match for the advanced South Koreans. Retired US Army general James Marks, a former senior intelligence officer for Korea, says that after a surprise attack, the North Korean advantage would last about four days.

Even if S. Korea lost the war, it would still be better than risking nuclear attack on the US as Status Quo does.

Wesley Jefferies 2019 (research assistant with the Center on the Future of War, a joint initiative between Arizona State University and the International Security Program at New America.) 23 April 2019 “What U.S. Policy for North Korea Fails to Understand”<https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2019/4/23/what-us-policy-for-north-korea-fails-to-understand>

The chance of conflict in the Korean peninsula should be weighed against the direct threat being posed to the U.S. The risk of nuclear war in Seoul should not be exchanged for the risk of nuclear war in San Francisco. Washington should not deceive itself that risk and tragedy can be forever postponed. The U.S. should prepare for the unthinkable to prevent it from becoming the inevitable.

A/T “N. Korea has 1 million man army!” – With old equipment and they’d be annihilated by air attacks

Taoka Shunji 2019 ( former defense writer of the Asahi Shinbun, former Senior Fellow of CSIS, former Guest Fellow of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) 15 Nov 2019 “Withdrawal of U.S. Forces from South Korea is Long Overdue: Examining the Military Balance on the Korean Peninsula” <https://apjjf.org/2019/22/Taoka.html>

The size of the North Korean Army is estimated at 1,100,000, but their equipment is woefully outdated, so if the soldiers were to leave their underground fortifications, they would likely be annihilated in air attacks.

A/T “Chinese aggression”

S. Korea (=ROK, Republic of Korea) is of little value in containing China

Doug Bandow 2019 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute. He is a former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 19 October 2019 “Trump Should Reassess America’s Commitment to South Korea” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/trump-should-reassess-americas-commitment-south-korea>

The president’s fixation on money admittedly is short‐​sighted. However, past ties do not justify preserving an alliance that has lost its purpose. American troops are not necessary to protect the ROK. Nor is South Korean participation likely to materially aid the U.S. in a war with others, most importantly China. Seoul is unlikely to make itself a permanent enemy of the PRC by aiding the U.S. in contingencies that do not involve the ROK, such as an invasion of Taiwan. Which means the South is of little value in containing China.

S. Korea would not want to be an enemy of the PRC

Doug Bandow 2020 (senior fellow at the Cato Institute. A former special assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 13 March 2020 “Not Even South Korea Deserves Unlimited Defense From America” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/not-even-south-korea-deserves-unlimited-defense-america>

Alliance advocates also envision South Korea contributing to a system to contain China. In fact, even before the Chinese Communist Party bungled its response to the coronavirus epidemic, China was facing significant economic, demographic, and political challenges. More important, the likelihood that the South would back America in war against Beijing that did not involve the ROK is virtually zero. No South Korean government leader would make China into a permanent enemy to, say, help Taiwan or the Philippines.

S. Korea and Japan don’t get along now—how would they get along in a battle against China?

Doug Bandow 2019 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute. He is a former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 19 October 2019 “Trump Should Reassess America’s Commitment to South Korea” (brackets in original) <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/trump-should-reassess-americas-commitment-south-korea>

Even if South Korea was theoretically willing to join such a conflict, how effective would it be? As Alan Tonelson of the U.S. Business and Industry Council Educational Foundation observed: “the [ROK‐​Japan] quarrel’s outbreak and intensification represent the most important evidence to date that both Japan and South Korea care little about providing such support in an effective way—which unavoidably requires them to work together. How can they cooperate, and thereby effectively reinforce U.S. military operations, if they literally won’t even talk to each other about current or emerging battlefield conditions and threats?”

The U.S. still has troops in Japan, enough to deter threats from China

Doug Bandow 2019 (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute. He is a former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan.) 19 October 2019 “Trump Should Reassess America’s Commitment to South Korea” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/trump-should-reassess-americas-commitment-south-korea>

However, dropping a commitment that has lost its relevance—the peninsula lacks the security salience of the Cold War and the South is well able to defend itself—is not abandonment. An American presence in Japan is not dependent on stationing troops in Korea, though Tokyo also could do far more militarily, almost certainly enough to deter threats from China.

A/T “North Korean aggression”

S. Korea has a strong military and plenty of resources

Major Christopher Lee 2014 (active duty Major in the U.S. Army. A graduate of West Point, he has served for eight years as an intelligence officer. He is currently a Foreign Area Officer for the Northeast Asia region and a graduate student at Columbia University) 24 July 2014 “TIME FOR U.S. FORCES TO LEAVE SOUTH KOREA” <https://warontherocks.com/2014/07/time-for-u-s-forces-to-leave-south-korea/>

However, since the signing of the treaty back in 1953, South Korea has gone from a poor authoritarian state to one of the world’s wealthiest nations. A [21st century South Korea](http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Economy_of_South_Korea.html) has a “market economy that ranks 15th in the world by nominal GDP and 12th by purchasing power parity.” South Korea’s overall military strength ranks [ninth in the world](http://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=south-korea) and it also possesses a vast body of [military machinery](http://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=south-korea), including 2,346 tanks and 1,393 aircrafts. According to Yonhap News, South Korea [spends](http://thediplomat.com/2013/07/south-korea-goes-all-in-on-missile-defense/) a “yearly average of $38.52 billion on defense.” Certainly, the South Korean government views the defense of its national borders as a top priority.

South Korea can defend itself - plenty of manpower and budget

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Third, South Korea is capable of defending itself, as evidenced by its considerable military manpower and budget. [South Korea](http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41481.pdf) has increased its maximum range of ballistic missiles from 300km to 800km and increased the payload limit from 500 kg to 1,000kg. South Korea also purchased $540 million worth of U.S. weapons systems in 2011, and [recently reported](http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41481.pdf) that for their next main fighter aircraft they will purchase the Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

U.S. nuclear umbrella (we nuke N. Korea if they nuke S. Korea) means we don’t need US troops in S. Korea

Major Christopher Lee 2014 (active duty Major in the U.S. Army. A graduate of West Point, he has served for eight years as an intelligence officer. He is currently a Foreign Area Officer for the Northeast Asia region and a graduate student at Columbia University) 24 July 2014 “TIME FOR U.S. FORCES TO LEAVE SOUTH KOREA” <https://warontherocks.com/2014/07/time-for-u-s-forces-to-leave-south-korea/>

For the last six decades, the U.S. and South Korea have built an inseparable alliance and have ensured a peaceful, secure, and prosperous environment for the peninsula, with the exception of provocative, yet controlled, strikes from North Korea. South Korea’s pledge to democracy and a market economy have afforded the country the luxury of stable economic dominance. Along the same lines, its affluence has helped to maintain a robust defense posture, which supports both nations’ security interests. South Korea is a proven ally that can defend its homeland. Even without conventional force, the extended deterrence of U.S. nuclear umbrella reinforces the assurance of stout defense against North Korea. Hence, there is no reason for U.S. troops to be stationed in South Korea.

A/T “U.S. deterrence lost” - Troop withdrawal wouldn’t make any difference for deterrence

David Gilbert 2018 (He is currently working with VICE media as a reporter on various global current affair. He was previously the European technology editor at the International Business) 4 May 2018 “Why pulling U.S. troops out of South Korea won’t change the balance of power” <https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/xw7nea/trump-us-troops-south-korea-withdraw>

A troop withdrawal “will not significantly affect military balance of power in the region,” Baohui Zhang, director of the Centre for Asian Pacific Studies at Lingnan University in Hong Kong, told VICE News.

“U.S. military deterrence against both North Korea and China is based on long-range precision strikes by cruise missiles and stealth bombers. So a reduction of ground forces in South Korea may not make too much a difference.”

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