Negative Brief: South Korea Withdrawal

By Jonathan T. Helton

**Resolved: The United States Federal Government should considerably decrease its military commitments.**

The AFF case withdraws U.S. forces from South Korea and hands over control of operational command (OPCON). Why? Allegedly because it costs too much to station troops in S. Korea and because Kim Jong Un is threatening to attack the U.S. The NEG strategy is simple. First, stationing the troops in S. Korea is much cheaper than housing them in the U.S. S. Korea pays 50% of their costs right now. After the AFF plan, we pay 100%. Second, withdrawing the troops would be a costly endeavor, in addition to finding them bases to stay at in the U.S. Beyond the logistical difficulties, the U.S. risks losing S. Korea into China’s sphere of influence, and risk nuclear proliferation in the region once our allies see we aren’t committed to countering China, N. Korea, and Russia. Finally, N. Korea wants a unified Korea and would be able to bully S. Korea into advantageous agreements. Even without their nukes, N. Korea poses a potent threat to Seoul and S. Korea. A forward U.S. presence acts as a deterrent against N. Korean aggression.
[Note: throughout this brief, “ROK” stands for “Republic of Korea,” the official name for South Korea, which we also may abbreviate as SK. “DPRK” stand s for “Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” the official name of North Korea, which we also may abbreviate as NK.]

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Negative: South Korea Withdrawal

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

1. A/T “Cost of US troop commitment”

South Korea is already paying its fair share and claims of excess US cost are exaggerated

Capt. Sukjoon Yoon 2020 (Captain, ROK Navy, retired) senior fellow at the Korea Institute for Military Affairs.) 29 January 2020 “US Interests Are Not Served by Making a Scapegoat of South Korea” <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/us-interests-are-not-served-by-making-a-scapegoat-of-south-korea/>

Current South Korean contributions to maintaining USFK fall into three categories: the wages of Korean civilians employed by USFK, the construction of military facilities, and logistics support. Since the previous SMA expired on December 31, 2019, Washington has been calling on South Korea to expand the existing SMA framework to cover additional obligations. But even before the first SMA was negotiated in 1991, South Korea provided land and other facilities and has also purchased many advanced weapons and systems from the United States to establish interoperability. The full extent of the South Korean contribution is thus ignored by Pompeo and Esper’s article, which entirely overlooks the costs entailed in maintaining a combined defense posture with the United States, not to mention the benefits to the U.S. defense industry.

Argument that SK is wealthy and should pay more ignores the reality of their unique situation

Capt. Sukjoon Yoon 2020 (Captain, ROK Navy, retired) senior fellow at the Korea Institute for Military Affairs.) 29 January 2020 “US Interests Are Not Served by Making a Scapegoat of South Korea” <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/us-interests-are-not-served-by-making-a-scapegoat-of-south-korea/>

For comparison, consider the situation of the European Union or Japan, which can base their defense spending purely on the perceived level of threat. The argument that South Korea is now wealthy, like the EU and Japan, and should therefore be willing to pay more toward USFK, completely ignores the different situations.

South Korea spends 3.4% of its GDP on defense – ridiculous to claim SK isn’t doing enough

Sukjoon Yoon 2020 (Sukjoon Yoon (Captain, ROK Navy, retired) senior fellow at the Korea Institute for Military Affairs.) 29 January 2020 “US Interests Are Not Served by Making a Scapegoat of South Korea” <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/us-interests-are-not-served-by-making-a-scapegoat-of-south-korea/>

South Korea’s exemplary economic and political progress is entirely due to the hard work and wise choices of the South Korean people. It is ridiculous to interpret this progress as a debt due to the United States, and absurd to use it as an argument to oblige a fivefold increase in the ROK’s current contribution to USFK. South Korea faces a direct and imminent threat on a daily basis, from North Korean conventional and nuclear weapons, and as a result the country spent 3.4 percent of GDP on defense in 2019. But now it seems that the ROK-U.S. alliance is no longer a shared endeavor dedicated to the spirit of “Fighting Tonight”; instead, the U.S. troops stationed in Korea are a force of foreign mercenaries whose political masters have no loyalty beyond monetary gain and the principle of “America First.”

For comparison: NATO goal: 2%, NATO average is 1.5% USA spends just over 3% Australia = 2%

Michael O'Hanlon 2019 (senior fellow, and director of research, in Foreign Policy at the Brookings Institution, where he specializes in U.S. defense strategy, the use of military force, and American national security policy. He co-directs the Security and Strategy team, the Defense Industrial Base working group; adjunct professor at Columbia, Georgetown, and Syracuse universities, and a member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Was a member of the external advisory board at the CIA 2011-12.) 27 November 2019 “What is going on with the United States alliance with South Korea?” <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/11/27/what-is-going-on-with-the-united-states-alliance-with-south-korea/>

The United States itself spends just over 3%. The average among NATO countries is 1.5%, and the formal NATO goal is 2% for every member. Australia clocks in at 2%. Japan, much to the relief of many around the world, remains no higher than 1%. In order to blue-sky the policy question of how much burden sharing is sufficient, there could perhaps be several ways to attempt shaping up an answer.

A/T “U.S. wastes money” – Actually, troops in South Korea can be redeployed to fight elsewhere

Michael O'Hanlon 2019 (senior fellow, and director of research, in Foreign Policy at the Brookings Institution, where he specializes in U.S. defense strategy, the use of military force, and American national security policy. He co-directs the Security and Strategy team, the Defense Industrial Base working group; adjunct professor at Columbia, Georgetown, and Syracuse universities, and a member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Was a member of the external advisory board at the CIA 2011-12.) 27 November 2019 “What is going on with the United States alliance with South Korea?” <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/11/27/what-is-going-on-with-the-united-states-alliance-with-south-korea/>

The last two ideas can be rejected quickly. Even those American forces stationed in South Korea are usable elsewhere. During the 2000s, the Bush administration sent a brigade of American troops from South Korea to the Middle East, and they never returned to South Korea. Those are American forces, after all, not mercenaries that are hired by South Korea, as Heritage Foundation scholar Bruce Klingner has noted. On the first two ideas, South Korea is doing quite well. But even if it did better, President Trump might not care, since he seems more focused on the transactional status of the alliance than on unified deterrence against North Korea.

2. Net benefits outweigh costs

Containing N. Korea has big benefits to the US. Defense of South Korea has global importance

Sukjoon Yoon 2020 (Sukjoon Yoon (Captain, ROK Navy, retired) is currently a senior fellow at the Korea Institute for Military Affairs.) 29 January 2020 “US Interests Are Not Served by Making a Scapegoat of South Korea” <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/us-interests-are-not-served-by-making-a-scapegoat-of-south-korea/> (brackets added)

The WSJ [Wall Street Journal] article also refers to the U.S.-South Korea alliance as a “linchpin” for Northeast Asian peace and prosperity. This suggests that the security benefits are entirely local, with the United States altruistically succoring South Korea (which, by clear implication, should be eternally grateful for this noble and disinterested assistance). It’s as if containing North Korea were of no importance for U.S. interests, not to mention the role played in deterring China and Russia by the forward deployment of U.S. military personnel on the Korean Peninsula. When the full balance of benefits and contributions for the United States and South Korea is taken into account, the attempt to impose a new framework for the 11th SMA is revealed as a straightforward shakedown.

3. A/T “US troops not enough to solve”

More would be sent in case of war. Promise of U.S. reinforcements deters North Korea

David Axe 2019 (He serves as Defense Editor of the National Interest) 20 November 2019 “Does South Korea Still Need U.S. Troops? In Short, Yes” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/does-south-korea-still-need-us-troops-short-yes-97817>

But the Americans permanently in South Korea are just the tip of the proverbial spear. In the event of war, the United States could shift potentially hundreds of thousands of additional troops plus hundreds of warplanes to the Korean theater. It’s those reinforcements that truly could make the difference in South Korea’s defense.

SOLVENCY

1. Reduced US commitment won’t encourage NK peacefulness/denuclearization

Historical example: US canceled US/SK military exercises to satisfy NK demands… and nothing improved

Duyeon Kim 2019 (adjunct senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security and columnist with the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.) 17 July 2019 “Can North Korea Be Deterred?” <https://www.cfr.org/blog/can-north-korea-be-deterred>

Second, Trump’s unilateral cancellation of U.S.-South Korean combined military exercises, abruptly announced at the June 2018 Singapore summit, weakens the allies’ military readiness and inter-operability, which are critical for maintaining the capabilities that are the linchpin in the U.S.-South Korea deterrence posture. The move satisfied Pyongyang’s demands for an end to these drills, which it claims are rehearsals for war, but many Korea watchers worry that the cancellation of combined exercises weakens the allies’ readiness against North Korean aggression and is a stepping stone to eventually ridding U.S. troops from the peninsula and breaking the U.S.-South Korean alliance. While these large-scale drills were replaced with smaller-scale command post exercises and revised field training programs to provide space for diplomacy, they have not led to material changes to North Korea’s military posture or readiness, or incentivized Pyongyang to take meaningful denuclearization measures. General Robert Abrams, commander of the U.S.-South Korea Combined Forces Command, testified in February that North Korea’s military continued its winter training exercise with the same size, scope, and timing as previous years.

Already tried & failed: We tried reducing military “provocations” but NK didn’t reduce its hostility

Bruce Klinger 2019 (He is Senior Research Fellow for Northeast Asia in the Asian Studies Center, of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy, at The Heritage Foundation.) 2 December 2019 “Enhance South Korean Military Capabilities Before OPCON Transfer” <https://www.heritage.org/node/18166845/print-display>

Cancelling Military Exercises. Since President Trump unilaterally announced the allies would stop “provocative wargames”—a North Korean term previously rejected by Washington—the U.S. and South Korea have cancelled 12 military exercises and imposed constraints on others. The U.S. has received no diplomatic reciprocal actions by North Korea—nor did the regime suspend any of its conventional military exercises, including its large-scale annual Winter and Summer Training Cycles. It was a fallacy to conclude that the unilateral concession of canceling military exercises would cause North Korea to change. Pyongyang continues to criticize even the scaled-down allied exercises and demands a suspension of “all war trainings.”

DISADVANTAGES

1. Korean War II (North Korean aggression)

Link: We still need troops in S. Korea to deter NK aggression

David Axe 2019 (Defense Editor of the National Interest) 20 November 2019 “Does South Korea Still Need U.S. Troops? In Short, Yes” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/does-south-korea-still-need-us-troops-short-yes-97817>

In a concession to North Korea, Trump ordered U.S. forces in South Korea to suspend major training exercises with their South Korean counterparts. With the six-decade U.S.-South Korean alliance seemingly on the verge of collapse, it’s worth asking just how much South Korea, the world’s 12th-largest economy, needs U.S. troops. The answer, in short, is that American forces still are vital to South Korea’s defense and, by extension, to deterring North Korean aggression. At the end of the Korean War in 1953, the United States and South Korea signed a mutual-defense pact that remains in effect.

Link: U.S. physical presence acts as a deterrent

William Lucier 2018 (graduated from Fordham University with a BA in International Studies; wrote his senior thesis on North Korea.) 3 October 2018 “U.S Troops: The Backbone of Peace and Stability on the Korean Peninsula” <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/u-s-troops-in-south-korea/>

U.S forces in Korea deter a North Korean attack as they provide both the credibility and operational capacity to ensure that North Korea does not view an invasion of South Korea as having a high probability of success. The troops provide credibility to the United States’ commitment to defend South Korea as their physical presence virtually insures that they would be involved in defending South Korea if a conflict were to break out. Additionally, American troops provide the operational capacity needed to deter a North Korean attack, because their advanced weaponry could change the North Korean calculus against an invasion of the South.

Link: South Korea has no anti-ballistic missile capability

Bruce Klingner 2019 (He specializes in Korean and Japanese affairs as the senior research fellow for Northeast Asia; Heritage Foundation) 3 October 2019 “North Korea’s Latest Missile Test Is Dangerous Escalation” <https://www.heritage.org/missile-defense/commentary/north-koreas-latest-missile-test-dangerous-escalation>

South Korea currently has no defenses against North Korean submarine-launched ballistic missiles, which are assessed as being capable of carrying nuclear warheads. South Korean naval ships are equipped with the Standard Missile-2 missile, which has no anti-ballistic missile capability.

Link: A nuclear N. Korea could easily bully S. Korea into a dangerous position

**Michael Heng 2018 (He is a retired professor who has held academic appointments in Australia, the Netherlands, and at six universities in Asia) 20 June 2018 “If the US military withdraws from Korea, China will be a big loser”** <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/united-states/article/2151584/if-us-military-withdraws-korea-china-will-be>

The biggest loser in the new situation would be South Korea. A nuclear-armed North Korea would easily impose demands on a South Korea without American military protection. The demands could range from reunification on Pyongyang’s terms to generous economic assistance from Seoul. A US departure from South Korea would weaken South Korea to the extent that it might have to give in to the terms dictated by North Korea on reunification. A reunified Korea may well turn out to be a second reunified Vietnam, but with nuclear warheads. Taking either a short or long view of history, there is very little reason to believe that such a Korea would prove to be a friendly neighbour to China.

Link: NK dictator Kim can play the long game and invade SK a few years after US troop withdrawal

Prof. Tom Campbell 2018 (He is a professor at Chapman University. He was Chairman of the World Affairs Council of Northern California, and a five-term U.S. Congressman serving on the International Relations Committee.) 14 May 2018 “Without US troops, would the North invade South Korea?” <https://www.ocregister.com/2018/05/14/without-u-s-troops-would-the-north-invade-south-korea/>

Five or 10 years after the U.S. troops are gone, Kim could threaten a conventional invasion. Kim is a dictator; no term limits apply; he can play the long game. How long Trump has is subject to domestic considerations, including Robert Mueller, and, in no event, longer than six and a half more years. Further, Trump might be eager for a diplomatic victory for domestic reasons. As the Watergate scandal began to close in around President Nixon, he sought success in foreign relations, especially the growing détente with the Soviet Union.

Impact: Korean War II = 10 million SK citizens in Seoul taken hostage

David Axe 2019 (Defense Editor of the National Interest) 20 November 2019 “Does South Korea Still Need U.S. Troops? In Short, Yes” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/does-south-korea-still-need-us-troops-short-yes-97817>

Military journalist Kyle Mizokami in 2013 tested that proposition. Playing the realistic tabletop war game Next War: Korea, Mizokami discovered that North Korea’s million-person army with its thousands of old tanks and warplanes could simply overwhelm the better-equipped U.S. and South Korean troops along the Demilitarized Zone. After just a few days of fighting, North Korea could capture Seoul and take hostage its 10 million residents.

Impact: Conventional Korean War II would be devastating: Economic, human and environmental 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>

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.

Impact: North Korea could hit Seoul in minutes

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>

The experts I spoke to all stressed that Kim could devastate Seoul without even needing to use his weapons of mass destruction. The North Korean military has an enormous number of rocket launchers and artillery pieces within range of Seoul. The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service estimates that Kim could hammer the South Korean capital with an astonishing 10,000 rockets per minute — and that such a barrage could kill more than 300,000 South Koreans in the opening days of the conflict. That’s all without using a single nuclear, chemical, or biological weapon.

Impact: NK dictator Kim has a massive arsenal of biological weapons, which could kill 2.5 million

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>

The consensus view is that Kim would try to level the playing field by using his vast arsenal of chemical weapons, which is believed to be the biggest and most technologically advanced in the world. (Kim is estimated to have between [2,500 and 5,000 metric tons of deadly nerve agents](http://www.nti.org/learn/countries/north-korea/chemical/) like [sarin](http://healthland.time.com/2012/12/06/assads-chemical-weapons-what-does-sarin-do/), which can cause paralysis and, ultimately, death.) With so many artillery pieces and rocket launchers trained on Seoul, Kim has the ability to quickly blanket the densely packed city with huge amounts of nerve agents. The human toll would be staggeringly high: The military historian Reid Kirby [estimated](https://thebulletin.org/sea-sarin-north-korea%E2%80%99s-chemical-deterrent10856) last June that a sustained sarin attack could kill up to 2.5 million people in Seoul alone, while injuring nearly 7 million more. Men, women, and children would very literally choke to death in the streets of one of the world’s wealthiest and most vibrant cities. It would be mass murder on a scale rarely seen in human history.

****A/T “SK can win a war with NK”- NK doesn’t need to win: With a massive arsenal of non-nuclear weapons, firing them off puts 25 million at risk****

**Major Peter Murphy 2019 (***has experience working in Iraq, the Philippines, South Korea, and the Pentagon; Master of International Relations from Bond Univ. in Australia, Master of Global Affairs and Policy from Yonsei Graduate School of International Studies in Korea.) 17 October 2019 “Why North Korea Can, and Should Give Up Their Nukes”* <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/10/17/why_north_korea_can_and_should_give_up_their_nukes_114795.html>

Estimates aside, the fact of the matter is that North Korea in a single volley could launch hundreds of tons of explosives at the greater Seoul area, a densely populated area of more than 25 million people. There currently exists no means to intercept such a barrage, and no amount of sheltering or attempted evacuation from such a congested area could prevent a massive amount of casualties from such an attack. North Korea further augments this deterrence by punishment with ever increasing capabilities in cyber warfare, special operations infiltrators capable of wreaking havoc, and conventional intermediate-range missiles that can strike Japan or U.S. bases in the Pacific.

A/T “South Korea’s military is sufficient” – Not without US forces.

David Axe 2019 (He serves as Defense Editor of the National Interest. He is the author of the graphic novels War Fix, War Is Boring and Machete Squad.) 20 November 2019 “Does South Korea Still Need U.S. Troops? In Short, Yes” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/does-south-korea-still-need-us-troops-short-yes-97817>

But it’s unclear whether the world’s 12th-largest economy can afford to replace forces contributed by the world’s number-one economy. Trump’s demand for a few billion dollars could achieve what decades of military posturing by North Korea have failed to do: deeply undermine South Korea’s defenses.

2. Loss of U.S. geopolitical strength

Link: Pullout from S. Korea reduces US influence, leaves vacuum for China to fill, reduces deterrence of aggression

Jacqueline Feldscher and Wesley Morgan 2018 (Feldscher is national security reporter at POLITICO. Prior to joining POLITICO, she covered defense from Capitol Hill and the Pentagon for the Washington Times and the Washington Examiner. Morgan is a military affairs reporter at POLITICO. Before joining POLITICO, he worked as a freelance journalist in Washington, DC, Iraq and Afghanistan) 13 June 2018 “Republicans buck Trump on Korea troop pullout talk” (brackets in original) <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/06/13/trump-korea-pullout-asia-troops-623328>

“The fear is if we were going to draw down our presence [in Korea], the only place we would still have permanent troops in northeast Asia is Japan,” said Hass, who previously served as the director for China, Taiwan and Mongolia on former President Barack Obama’s National Security Council. “I can imagine a situation where Japanese voters start asking, ‘Why are we the only suckers in Asia stuck with American troops?’” The fear: Withdrawing from the region entirely would diminish U.S. influence in the Asia-Pacific, leaving a vacuum for China to fill. Having U.S. troops in South Korea also demonstrates a clear commitment to American alliances and provides a forward presence to deter aggression

Link: U.S. presence counters China’s sphere of influence

Frances Tilney Burke 2018 (PhD candidate at Tufts University’s Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and a non-resident fellow at the Modern War Institute at West Point. Previously worked as a special assistant to two Deputy Secretaries of Defense during the George W. Bush administration, as a counterterrorism analyst at the Defense Intelligence Agency) 21 May 2018 “U.S. Forces in South Korea: A seven-decade commitment” <https://theconversation.com/u-s-forces-in-south-korea-a-seven-decade-commitment-96877>

In a broader strategic sense, large military exercises in the Pacific demonstrate U.S. power to the region. Beijing can practically sip a Tsingtao on the patio while watching Uncle Sam gambol about its backyard — the Korean peninsula. That reminds the potential adversary that the U.S. supports the democracies of South Korea and Japan, and opposes what Princeton international affairs scholar G. John Ikenberry calls a “closed, illiberal Chinese sphere of influence.”

Link: US forces in SK are a hedge against rising China

William Lucier 2018 (graduated from Fordham Univ with a BA in International Studies; wrote his senior thesis on North Korea) 3 October 2018 “U.S Troops: The Backbone of Peace and Stability on the Korean Peninsula” <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/u-s-troops-in-south-korea/>

Finally, U.S. forces in South Korea allow the U.S. to hedge against a rising China. The two air bases that the U.S. maintains in South Korea, Osan and Kusan, ensure that the United States will always have a platform to launch its aircraft in the region. This is particularly important as China has developed a new class of anti-ship missiles, which are specifically designed to impede U.S. carrier operations in the region.

Link: Undermines other U.S. commitments

Prof. Benjamin R. Young 2019 (assistant professor of cyber leadership and intelligence at Dakota State University.) 8 August 2019 “If Trump wins in 2020, he will pull US troops out of South Korea” <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/If-Trump-wins-in-2020-he-will-pull-US-troops-out-of-South-Korea>

However, it should not be laughed at. The unreasonableness of $5 billion is the entire point: the Trump administration understands that Seoul will not pay, especially after it funded the $10.7 billion upgrade of the U.S. garrison, Camp Humphreys. Washington wants to use it as leverage to curb and eventually pull U.S. troops out of South Korea. This would not only be a massive boon for North Korea, China and Russia -- all South Korea's rivals -- but would also signal to U.S. allies around the world that its military presence abroad is based on tit-for-tat economic exchange, not mutual security.

Link: Loss of stability and North Korean aggression + Increased pressure from China & Russia

Prof. Benjamin R. Young 2019 (He is assistant professor of cyber leadership and intelligence at Dakota State University.) 8 August 2019 “If Trump wins in 2020, he will pull US troops out of South Korea” (brackets added) <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/If-Trump-wins-in-2020-he-will-pull-US-troops-out-of-South-Korea>

Combined with the innovation of the Korean people and investment from the state, the continued U.S. military presence has helped the peninsula remain in a relative state of peace and thus contributed to the remarkable economic prosperity of South Korea. If USFK [US Forces Korea] leaves South Korea, North Korea may feel emboldened to launch an attack on South Korean territory. China and Russia will exert pressure on Seoul and pull the smaller nation into its economic orbit. South Korea needs USFK more than ever.

Link: South Korea turns to China

Capt. Sukjoon Yoon 2020 (Captain, ROK Navy, retired; senior fellow at the Korea Institute for Military Affairs.) 29 January 2020 “US Interests Are Not Served by Making a Scapegoat of South Korea” <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/us-interests-are-not-served-by-making-a-scapegoat-of-south-korea/>

South Korea and the United States have never needed one another more, and they should be working toward narrowing their differences and expanding their mutual understanding. Is this the moment for Washington to insist on increasing South Korea’s annual contribution to support USFK from $870 million to $5 billion? Trump is likely ignorant of South Korea’s own domestic politics. There is growing support among younger South Koreans for a more autonomous defense policy: if the United States wants to withdraw its troops from the Korean Peninsula, then that is fine by them. How would the United States benefit from Seoul reaching out to China for a security alliance? At present this possibility seems remote, but South Korea is undeniably going through a transitional period of rebalancing its strategic stance between the two great powers.

Link: China wants Asia hegemony, wants to replace U.S. in the region

Prof. Oriana Mastro 2019 (Assistant Professor of Security Studies at Georgetown Univ) “The Stealth Superpower” <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/china-plan-rule-asia> Jan/Feb 2019

China has no interest in establishing a web of global alliances, sustaining a far-flung global military presence, sending troops thousands of miles from its borders, leading international institutions that would constrain its own behavior, or spreading its system of government abroad. But to focus on this reluctance, and the reassuring Chinese statements reflecting it, [is a mistake](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2018-02-13/china-reckoning). Although China does not want to usurp the United States’ position as the leader of a global order, its actual aim is nearly as consequential. In the Indo-Pacific region, China wants complete dominance; it wants to force the United States out and become the region’s unchallenged political, economic, and military hegemon. And globally, even though it is happy to leave the United States in the driver’s seat, it wants to be powerful enough to counter Washington when needed.

Link: China gaining Asian regional hegemony leads to gaining global hegemony, replacing USA

Min-Hyung Kim 2019. (Department of Political Science and International Relations, Kyung Hee University, Seoul, South Korea) 4 Feb 2019 A real driver of US–China trade conflict: The Sino–US competition for global hegemony and its implications for the future <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ITPD-02-2019-003/full/html>

Although China repeatedly claims that it does not seek to replace US hegemony in the world, its behavior revealed by the initiatives of the BRI, the AIIB and Made in China 2015 illustrates that its ultimate goal is to be a global hegemon. This is not surprising because all the rising powers in history invariably sought to first dominate the region they are situated ([Mearsheimer, 2011, 2014](https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ITPD-02-2019-003/full/html#ref031%20ref032)) and expand their power globally ([Gilpin, 1981](https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ITPD-02-2019-003/full/html#ref012)).

Impact: Apocalyptic consequences without US hegemony. Loss of peace, prosperity, democracy, world order

Brook Manville 2018 (principal of Brook Manville LLC, consulting on strategy and organization) 14 Oct 2018 “Why A Crumbling World Order Urgently Needs U.S. Leadership” FORBES https://www.forbes.com/sites/brookmanville/2018/10/14/why-a-crumbling-world-order-urgently-needs-u-s-leadership/#2bb8912f2e61 (brackets added)

The botanical metaphor in [Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Robert] Kagan’s book title began our recent conversation. “We’ve been living in a tranquil garden of largely peaceful practices and liberal expectations across much of the world, ignoring the dark forces of jungle multiplying under the rocks. If we don’t defend civilization’s cultivation—especially American’s guarantee of peace and economic integration across the world—the toxic creatures and weeds will roar back.” Thus China’s determined military rise, Russia’s continuing aggressions, fiery authoritarians on the march in so many once democratic countries. As [Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Robert] Kagan continued, “Trump has been damaging the system—he too seems to have forgotten what good it has delivered—but actually America’s desire for maintaining the global order has been diminishing for years. After the dissolution of the Soviet empire in the 1990s, people talked about ‘the end of history”—that America didn’t have to worry anymore about war or aggression. History doesn’t end, it simply paused. The ugliest aspects of human nature are surging again.”
**Vanishing Leadership, Vanishing Peace**
Kagan’s apocalyptic message, repeated in other recent writings, is lucid and terrifying, all the more devastating for its relentless use of history. It’s a footnoted plea that “we’ve seen this movie before.” He reminds us that Americans have frequently turned away from defending world order, with regrettably familiar outcomes: to be dragged in later at greater cost (e.g. helping to stop Hitler earlier might have prevented World War II); or, simply hoping that “the problem would go away,” to watch it get ten times worse (e.g. Obama’s policy in Syria). Kagan acknowledges that America has sometimes misstepped (e.g. Viet Nam, Iraq), but he still argues that overall our foreign engagement has produced more peace and prosperity than not. “History shows,” he summarized, “that world order has never been achieved without some constructive force to keep the peace. The relative harmony and fair play we’ve created in the modern world will vanish if the U.S. forsakes international leadership.”

3. Relocation cost

Link: South Korea pays 50% of costs now. When they come home to the US, we pay 100%!

Josh Rogin 2018 (He is a Washington Post columnist who covers foreign policy and national security.) 15 June 2018 “Josh Rogin: U.S. faces too many risks to withdraw troops from South Korea” <https://www.pilotonline.com/opinion/columns/article_5f3f4955-abb6-5c91-8b8a-b849057c5867.html>

The Washington effort is heating up to convince Trump to abandon his drive to drastically pare down the number of U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula. Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, successfully added an amendment to next year's National Defense Authorization Act stating that drastic troop reductions would be disastrous.

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

The amendment points out that Seoul paid 93 percent of the $10.7 billion cost to expand the U.S. Army garrison Camp Humphreys. South Korea currently pays 50 percent of all operating costs for U.S. troops stationed there. If they came home, the United States would pay 100 percent.

Link: Withdrawal from S. Korea would be massively expensive.

Larry Niksch 2019 (former Specialist in Asian Affairs with the Congressional Research Service. He currently is a Fellow with the Institute for Korean-American Studies and a Senior Associate with the Center for Strategic and International Studies.) April 2019 “Special Report: Potential Sources of Opposition to a U.S. Troop Withdrawal from South Korea” <https://www.ncnk.org/resources/briefing-papers/all-briefing-papers/special-report-us-troop-withdrawal>

The NDAA’s prohibition of appropriated funds for removing troops from South Korea below a specified level is a powerful tool for opponents of a potential U.S. troop withdrawal. Any sizeable withdrawal of troops from South Korea would be hugely expensive, probably costing several billion dollars. The infrastructure, equipment, and weaponry of the 70-year American military presence in South Korea is vast. Some of this could be left with the South Koreans, but much of it would have to be removed and brought back to the United States or to U.S. bases in other countries. Without specific money appropriated for this purpose, the U.S. military could not do it.

Link: Transporting troops home and closing foreign bases is costly

Rick Berger 2019 (research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, where he works on the defense budget and other defense policy issues. He previously served as professional staff on the Senate Budget Committee, where he covered defense, foreign affairs, and veterans policy.) 15 March 2019 “‘COST PLUS 50’ AND BRINGING U.S. TROOPS HOME: A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS” <https://warontherocks.com/2019/03/cost-plus-50-and-bringing-u-s-troops-home-a-look-at-the-numbers/>

Summing up the new investments needed to replace the power projection capability that U.S. forces abroad provide is a massive task, beyond the scope of this article. Here I focus on what it would immediately cost to pull U.S. troops out of major overseas bases. Data from a 2004 Congressional Budget Office study and a 2013 RAND report makes possible a rough back-of-the-envelope calculation. The United States stations about 75,000 military personnel in Japan and South Korea and a little more than half that number in Germany and Italy. For the purposes of this analysis, the 75,000 personnel in Japan and South Korea will serve as a yardstick, so cut all the bills in half for Germany and Italy. First, simply paying to transport 75,000 personnel back to the United States costs roughly $500 million, excluding the bill for bringing all their equipment back. As seen in Afghanistan , the cost of returning equipment normally runs in the billions of dollars. RAND estimated that shutting down bases, issuing worker severance packages, and terminating existing contracts and leases for a portion of U.S. infrastructure in Europe would cost $410 million. Thus, a more expansive close-out could run up the tab to $1 to 2 billion. That does not include the very real potential for long-term environmental remediation work and preparations for redevelopment by private industry, which normally occur following base closures. Both types of expenditures routinely occur in domestic base closures.

Link: New construction needed to house troops domestically

Rick Berger 2019 (research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, where he works on the defense budget and other defense policy issues. He previously served as professional staff on the Senate Budget Committee, where he covered defense, foreign affairs, and veterans policy.) 15 March 2019 “‘COST PLUS 50’ AND BRINGING U.S. TROOPS HOME: A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS” <https://warontherocks.com/2019/03/cost-plus-50-and-bringing-u-s-troops-home-a-look-at-the-numbers/>

But by far the largest upfront cost to bring U.S. military units home is new construction once they get back on American soil. Where do you put 75,000 new personnel, in the case of a full withdrawal? According to RAND estimates, the new military construction to host these units and their families would easily cost $8 to $10 billion. Sure, there may be some extra room at certain large installations, such as Fort Hood or Fort Bliss. Optimists might also point out that in recent advocacy for a new base closure round, the Pentagon [determined](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Potochney_04-12-16.pdf) that it has approximately 20 percent excess infrastructure. But there is reason to suspect this aspect of the withdrawal will be quite expensive for the U.S. government despite the presence of “excess” resources.

Link: Maintenance backlog requires new buildups

Rick Berger 2019 (research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, where he works on the defense budget and other defense policy issues. He previously served as professional staff on the Senate Budget Committee, where he covered defense, foreign affairs, and veterans policy.) 15 March 2019 “‘COST PLUS 50’ AND BRINGING U.S. TROOPS HOME: A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS” <https://warontherocks.com/2019/03/cost-plus-50-and-bringing-u-s-troops-home-a-look-at-the-numbers/>

Base closure skeptics, including current Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jim Inhofe, often caution that infrastructure currently considered “excess” might one day be needed, should the U.S. military expand in size. However, it’s an open question whether the existing excess facilities are the types necessary to accommodate such growth. Indeed, after a decade of underfunding facilities maintenance that created a $116 billion backlog, many of these facilities likely suffer from significant degradation. Finding space for new units brought home from Germany, South Korea, or Japan would be exceedingly difficult, almost certainly requiring massive new expenditures for military construction.

Impact: Deficit spending harms 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. He is co-director of the Tax Policy Center, a joint venture of the Brookings Institution and the Urban Institute. He is also director of the Retirement Security Project.) 2 May 2019 “Five myths about federal debt” <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/five-myths-about-federal-debt/>

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.

A/T “Excess facilities” – Not enough + wrong types

Rick Berger 2019 (research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, where he works on the defense budget and other defense policy issues. He previously served as professional staff on the Senate Budget Committee, where he covered defense, foreign affairs, and veterans policy.) 15 March 2019 “‘COST PLUS 50’ AND BRINGING U.S. TROOPS HOME: A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS” <https://warontherocks.com/2019/03/cost-plus-50-and-bringing-u-s-troops-home-a-look-at-the-numbers/>

While the Pentagon undoubtedly does have excess facilities at its disposal, these facilities probably don’t align exactly with what would be needed to host entire new units. The Army’s analysis, for instance, found that its major training ranges had only 2 percent excess capacity, and the Air Force analysis found a similar figure. Bringing new units home would require building new training ranges, expanding existing infrastructure, or paying allies and partners abroad for their own training spaces.

4. Nuclear proliferation

Link: Withdrawal of US forces increases motivation for SK to develop its own nuclear weapons

NEW YORK TIMES 2018 (journalists Choe Sang-Hun and Motoko Rich) 4 May 2018 “Trump’s Talk of U.S. Troop Cuts Unnerves South Korea and Japan” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/04/world/asia/south-korea-troop-withdrawal-united-states.html>

Conservatives in South Korea bristle at the possibility of a troop withdrawal, arguing that it would expose their country to potential foes far stronger than North Korea, like China and Japan, which have invaded numerous times over the centuries. South Koreans reacted to Washington’s past efforts to pull out troops with calls for arming the country with nuclear weapons of its own.

Link: U.S. leadership counters nuclear proliferation and Chinese hegemony

Daniel DePetris 2019 (a fellow at Defense Priorities and a foreign policy columnist at The National Interest) 21 November 2019 “Troops for Nukes: Should the US Trade Its Forces in South Korea for North Korean Denuclearization?” <https://www.38north.org/2019/11/ddepetris112119/>

Resistance would be equally fierce in the executive branch, particularly from the US Department of Defense, and the uniformed military leadership, which believe that the US presence on the Korean Peninsula is critical to preventing Chinese hegemony in Northeast Asia and maintaining a credible deterrent against North Korean aggression. And while it may not matter to Trump, the US Department of State and his key national security advisors in the White House would worry about the detrimental effects of a US troop withdrawal on America’s system of global alliances as well as the potential for nuclear proliferation in the region.

Link: Withdrawing U.S. troops could cause S. Korea and Japan to build nukes

Daniel DePetris 2019 (fellow at Defense Priorities and a foreign policy columnist at The National Interest.) 21 November 2019 “Troops for Nukes: Should the US Trade Its Forces in South Korea for North Korean Denuclearization?” <https://www.38north.org/2019/11/ddepetris112119/>

There would also be strong and nearly universal opposition in Seoul and Tokyo. For both countries, the US commitment to their security is an integral component of their national defense strategies. The removal of US troops from South Korea could prompt Seoul and Tokyo to reconsider their status as non-nuclear weapons states. While this may not bother Trump, it would be the cause of intense concern across the national security apparatus and practically eliminate the president’s flexibility to actually implement a US drawdown.

Link: Japan could easily get nukes

**Prof. Michael Heng 2018 (retired professor who has held academic appointments in Australia, the Netherlands, and at six universities in Asia) 20 June 2018 “If the US military withdraws from Korea, China will be a big loser”** <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/united-states/article/2151584/if-us-military-withdraws-korea-china-will-be>

Added to this is the possibility of the emergence of Japan as a nuclear power in the wake of a US military withdrawal from South Korea. Japan, with its remarkable technological base, can rebuild its military to beyond its proclaimed self-defence needs and produce more deadly warheads and powerful delivery systems than North Korea within a short period

Internal link: Troop withdrawal encourages nuclear proliferation. Past experience with SK proves US presence motivates SK to “not” do nukes

Prof. Jonathan Markowitz, Prof. Paul Avey, and Prof. Robert Reardon 2017 (**Markowitz** is Assistant Professor in the International Relations and Political Science Department at the Univ of Southern California. **Avey** is an assistant professor of political science at Virginia Tech. **Reardon** is Assistant Professor of Political Science in the School of Public and International Affairs at N.C. State Univ) 29 September 2017 “Do U.S. Troop Withdrawals Cause Instability? Evidence from Two Exogenous Shocks on the Korean Peninsula” <https://poseidon01.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=509005100118099008025115110002091101062011084076070069105104085101120111072089010104001126060041109056096073065102013087087007029022075093060103010014003073085078106055026013085102083068000025107005103077029004100024120029126069090013022089118089025069&EXT=pdf>

The relationship with nuclear proliferation was more complex. U.S. troop withdrawals had no obvious effect on North Korea’s proliferation decisions. Troop withdrawal more clearly influenced South Korea’s nuclear decisions in the 1970s, but there was no similar effect in the 2000s. The ROK weapons program in the 1970s was instigated more by concerns about longterm U.S. retrenchment than by the immediate effect of the troop withdrawals on the local balance of power. American assurances that it remained committed to Seoul’s defense contributed to the successful effort to terminate the program. This suggests withdrawals are a permissive condition for proliferation, which is consistent with proliferation scholarship arguing strategic vulnerability alone is insufficient to explain the historical infrequency of proliferation (Hymans 2006, Solingen 2007, Rublee 2009).

Impact: More bombs and more proliferation = bigger risk of nuclear detonation through: Terrorist theft, unauthorized launch, cyber hacking, regional rivalries

Nuclear Threat Initiative 2015. (non-profit, non-partisan advocacy group) 31 Dec 2015 “THE NUCLEAR THREAT” <https://www.nti.org/learn/nuclear/>

We know that terrorists are seeking nuclear weapons. Today, there are more than 1,800 metric tons of weapons-usable nuclear materials-highly enriched uranium (HEU) and plutonium—stored in hundreds of sites across 25 countries, some of them poorly secured. To build a bomb, terrorists won't necessarily look to the biggest stockpiles; they'll go where nuclear materials are the most vulnerable. That makes global nuclear security only as strong as the weakest link in the chain.
Systems Vulnerabilities
Command and control systems are not perfect. People make mistakes. Sabotage can happen. Technology has flaws and systems fail. The possibility of an unauthorized launch—or even an authorized launch without time for due consideration—is simply too high.
Nuclear Proliferation
Nuclear technology and the know-how to build a bomb is no longer a monopoly controlled by states. The threat of cyber-terrorism looms large, and experts are working furiously to keep up with cyber vulnerabilities that could be exploited by hackers to initiate a catastrophe.
Regional Dangers
Bitter regional rivalries in the Middle East, Northeast Asia, South Asia and elsewhere pose clear and present nuclear dangers to global security. These rivalries raise the risk that a nuclear weapon might be used in a deliberate attack, and the consequences of a regional nuclear exchange would reverberate across the globe.

Impact: Nuclear proliferation undermines democracy

Prof. Gary Bass 2020 (professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton Univ.) 28 April 2020 “Proliferated Nuclear Ethics” <https://www.lawfareblog.com/proliferated-nuclear-ethics>

Yet nuclear weapons undercut many of the institutional advantages of democracy. This weaponry forces fast decisions about retaliatory strikes, which in turn forces swift decisions about preemptive strikes. If a democracy fights a nuclear war, it could hardly do so with the transparency, deliberative procedures, and public accountability ordinarily required in the moral justification of a just war. Anyway, even in conflicts not involving nuclear weapons, Congress has often retreated from restraining war-making U.S. presidents. Curtis Bradley and Jack Goldsmith [recount](https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/41426677) dozens of instances of Congress authorizing the use of force going back to the 1790s, while Harold Koh [warned](https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300044935/national-security-constitution) that the executive has been avoiding legislative constraints in foreign policy since Vietnam. When wielding the most lethal weapons in history, Donald Trump or Narendra Modi could be almost as unchecked as Vladimir Putin or Xi Jinping.

5. Premature OPCON transfer

Link: OPCON transfer has requirements not met yet. We need to wait.

Bruce Klinger 2019 (Senior Research Fellow for Northeast Asia in the Asian Studies Center, of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy, at The Heritage Foundation.) 2 December 2019 “Enhance South Korean Military Capabilities Before OPCON Transfer” <https://www.heritage.org/node/18166845/print-display>

Washington and Seoul agreed on three prerequisites for OPCON transfer. The South Korean armed forces must have acquired requisite military and command means to be able to lead the combined forces, and have sufficiently developed indigenous missile defense and preemptive attack capabilities against North Korean nuclear and missile threats. Last, the security environment must have improved due to complete or significant North Korean denuclearization. None of these preconditions have been achieved. There is a difference between an improved security condition simply from reduction of tensions and the actual reduction of the North Korean threat. Despite no progress toward North Korean denuclearization, President Moon still insists on OPCON transition. The U.S. continues to adhere to the conditions-based transfer agreement, but President Moon appears to be pushing for a timeline-based transfer based on political factors.

Link: More joint exercises needed to ensure OPCON success

Soo Kim 2020 (policy analyst at the nonprofit, non-partisan RAND Corporation and a former CIA analyst.) 2 April 2020 “U.S.–South Korea OPCON Transition: The Element of Timing” <https://www.rand.org/blog/2020/04/us-south-korea-opcon-transition-the-element-of-timing.html>

Take, for instance, the dozen or so joint U.S.-ROK exercises that were either canceled or scaled back last year to create a more conducive diplomatic atmosphere for nuclear negotiations with North Korea. The implicit expectation of the scale-down in exercises was that the North Korean regime would extend reciprocal diplomatic gestures and reduce military tensions by canceling its own military exercises. North Korea has met neither expectation. And while some maintain that computer-based simulations and more limited exercises can serve as effective substitutes, military experts continue to stress the importance of live exercises for achieving interoperability, combat readiness, and allied deterrence. If anything, there is likely a need for more exercises between the allies to verifiably test the post-OPCON security environment.

Link: Each missed exercise harms preparedness

Bruce Klinger 2019 (He is Senior Research Fellow for Northeast Asia in the Asian Studies Center, of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy, at The Heritage Foundation.) 2 December 2019 “Enhance South Korean Military Capabilities Before OPCON Transfer” <https://www.heritage.org/node/18166845/print-display>

Cancelling exercises has serious consequences. It directly affects interoperability and ability to conduct combined operations. In the short term, it may be possible to minimize the danger with computer-based exercises and low-level exercises, but over time interoperability is degraded, as is overall allied deterrence and defense capabilities. Missing one exercise may not be critical, but each missing iteration has cumulative negative effects.

Link: S. Korea lacks critical capabilities to coordinate wartime action with U.S. military

Soo Kim 2020 (policy analyst at the nonprofit, non-partisan RAND Corporation and a former CIA analyst.) 2 April 2020 “U.S.–South Korea OPCON Transition: The Element of Timing” <https://www.rand.org/blog/2020/04/us-south-korea-opcon-transition-the-element-of-timing.html>

Concerns regarding the capabilities and command structure of South Korean forces also raise questions about the readiness for OPCON transition. South Korea remains dependent on the U.S. military for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR). And while some experts assure that South Korea's defense budget will provide greater investment in ISR assets and early warning systems, others express grave concerns that its defense buildup may be halted under the conditions laid out in the September 2018 Inter-Korean Comprehensive Military Agreement. Under the agreement, the two sides are to consult with each other in a joint committee about any plan that could be construed as a hostile military act—and Pyongyang would no doubt see Seoul's buildup of ISR capabilities as hostile to its security. And at the tactical level, South Korea lacks the ability to seamlessly conduct joint operations within an integrated command structure. Inter-service coordination at the lower levels remains stovepiped, leading some experts to question whether South Korea could successfully make the leap to seamlessly coordinate wartime actions with the United States and the militaries of other countries participating in the UN command.

Impact: SK can’t deter or fight NK effectively. Cross-apply everything from Disad 1

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