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The Political-Economic Explanation for the US–South Korea Alliance's Cohesion

By

Manseok Lee

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Daniel J. Sargent, Co-Chair
Professor Michael A. Nacht, Co-Chair
Professor T.J. Pempel
Professor Karl Van Bibber
Professor Andrew Reddie

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Abstract

The Political-Economic Explanation for the US–South Korea Alliance's Cohesion

by

Manseok Lee

Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Daniel J. Sargent, Co-Chair
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This dissertation investigates the dynamics of cohesion within the US–South Korea alliance, a long-lasting but asymmetric defense partnership, and aims to answer the question: What factors drive changes in the alliance's cohesion? While enduring alliances are often viewed as cohesive, this study demonstrates that changes in cohesion can occur even within long-lasting alliances, necessitating an examination of cohesion dynamics separate from alliance durability.

Two main arguments are presented. First, changes in the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion were influenced by the interplay of international and domestic political-economic factors. The study argues that, in some cases, domestic constraints may outweigh international factors like shared threats and strategic interests in shaping the alliance cohesion. Second, in asymmetric alliances, the strategic interests and political-economic situation of the major power (the US) had a more significant impact on the alliance cohesion than the minor power (South Korea). Furthermore, the strategic interests and political-economic situation of the US, a major power, influenced not only its alliance policy but also the alliance policy of South Korea, a minor power closely monitoring the US situation.

An in-depth historical case study of the US–South Korea alliance during the 1960s and 1970s is conducted, a salient period characterized by significant changes in the alliance's cohesion. I select this period because it effectively demonstrates the inadequacy of existing literature focusing on threats and interests and validates the main arguments of this study. The study analyzes how evolving threat perceptions, strategic interests, and domestic political-economic developments contributed to changes in the alliance cohesion. It offers valuable insights into the driving forces behind these changes and the complex interplay among them, ultimately enriching our understanding of alliance dynamics. This study contributes to the existing research on the US–South Korea alliance and holds potential for further expansion into a general theory of alliance cohesion in asymmetric contexts.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

This study is about the cohesion of the United States (US)–South Korea alliance within the framework of asymmetric relations, in which one ally possesses significantly greater military and economic capabilities and takes on a larger share of defense roles.[1] I seek answers to the following question: when the two countries are situated in asymmetric relations, what explains the changes in their alliance's cohesion?

Stephen Walt posits that enduring alliances are cohesive, as their longevity often correlates with higher degrees of institutionalization, domestic support, dominant leadership, and ideological solidarity.[2] However, this explanation has its limitations, as there have been cases where a minor power, despite being in an existing alliance, pursued its own nuclear deterrent due to concerns about being deserted by its major power ally. Furthermore, there are examples of long-lasting alliances where a minor power sought to hedge or form alliances with other prominent powers, or when the major power ally withdrew its assistance from its minor power counterparts. These instances indicate eroding cohesion within an existing alliance, suggesting that changes in cohesion may be relevant to, but not synonymous with, alliance durability. Consequently, it is crucial to study alliance cohesion dynamics separately from durability. This is of great importance because cohesion is linked to an alliance's effectiveness in deterring external threats and defending against them if deterrence fails. An effective alliance is not solely defined by its durability, but also by its cohesion. As such, an approach that equates durability with cohesion may be insufficient in informing appropriate policies.

The importance of this subject is manifest in the US–South Korea alliance case. The US–South Korea alliance, which began in 1953, celebrates its 70th anniversary in 2023. In fact, along with the North Atlantic Alliance (or North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO]), which was founded in 1949, it is one of the longest-lasting alliances of the post-war international system. The US–South Korea alliance's longevity provides evidence of its effectiveness and utility.[3] However, as discussed above, duration alone does not ensure the success of an alliance as a national security strategy. Indeed, despite the US–South Korea alliance's overall achievements, Seoul harbors concerns about its reliability during potential crises on the Korean Peninsula, particularly in terms of whether the US would actively intervene and defend South Korea in the event of a major conflict.

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[1] I define alliance cohesion as how effectively allies are able to coordinate their goals and strategies toward attaining external goals, such as deterrence and defense. Ole R. Holsti, P. Terrence Hopmann, and John D. Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), 16; Patricia A. Weitsman, "Alliances and War," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, ed. Renee Marlin-Bennett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.

[2] Stephen M. Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," *Survival* 39, no. 1 (1997): 158-170.

[3] For example, Stephen M. Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," *Survival* 39, no. 1 (1997): 156-179.

Such concerns are evident in the current debate regarding South Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons.[4] Due to North Korea rapidly expanding its nuclear capabilities and adopting an aggressive policy regarding the use of nuclear weapons, a critical question has resurfaced in South Korea: would the US be willing to risk San Francisco in order to protect Seoul? In other words, South Koreans are uncertain whether the US would uphold its security commitments if a war were to occur on the Korean Peninsula, especially since North Korea's intercontinental ballistic missiles are capable of targeting the US mainland. This uncertainty has prompted a mainstream discussion in Seoul advocating for South Korea to develop its own nuclear deterrent to counter North Korea's threats rather than solely relying on the US security guarantees.

This is not the first instance of such an occurrence. During the 1970s, South Korea, due to concerns over potential US disengagement, sought to develop its own nuclear weapons. This underscores that even with the alliance's durability, the level of cohesion within it is subject to change. Therefore, there is the need for a more comprehensive examination of the US–South Korea alliance, with a focus on the underlying dynamics that influence its cohesion as a defense partnership.

The Definition

A defense alliance is formed with the intention of the signatories fighting together against common threats in order to ensure their national security. The efficacy of such an alliance hinges not only on its mere existence, but also on the assurance that in the event of an attack on one member country, the other countries will intervene decisively and provide robust support. If doubts arise concerning the commitment of alliance members to providing such assistance during a crisis, the affected countries may pursue alternative security measures or seek to forge new alliances. It is essential to recognize that such expectations also influence potential adversaries' behavior, as confronting a united and cohesive alliance is far more challenging than attacking a solitary country that lacks external support. Consequently, the anticipation of a unified and forceful response to aggression against any member of an alliance serves as a potent deterrent to hostile actions. This suggests that an alliance's success is contingent on its degree of cohesion— that is, the ability of its members to effectively align their objectives and strategies in pursuit of the alliance's goals rather than merely its longevity. A highly cohesive alliance is more likely to maintain its resolve during a crisis, rendering it an effective instrument for ensuring national security. Conversely, an alliance that exhibits weak cohesion may lose members due to them seeking alternative strategies beyond the confines of the alliance.

Alliance cohesion is particularly important for weaker countries involved in asymmetric alliances, wherein the minor powers depend on the security guarantees provided by their major power ally. The major power, given its robust military and economic capabilities, is likely able to address any threats in its vicinity; thus, even if the alliance falters during a crisis, the major

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[4] Ankit Panda, "Seoul's Nuclear Temptations and the U.S.-South Korean Alliance," *War on the Rocks*, February 3, 2023, https://warontherocks.com/2023/02/seouls-nuclear-temptations-and-the-u-s-south-korea-alliance; Ramon Pacheco Pardo, "South Korea Could Get Away with the Bomb," *Foreign Policy*, March 16, 2023, https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/16/south-korea-nuclear-weapons-military-defense-security-proliferation-npt.

power's fundamental national security, such as protection against an invasion of the mainland, will likely remain relatively unharmed. By contrast, the minor powers that rely on the major power within the alliance face heightened risks to their national security if the alliance proves ineffective during times of crisis. The potential ramifications of this situation for the minor powers may include the loss of sovereignty, prompting them to be more sensitive to changes in the alliance cohesion than their major power counterpart. Therefore, if the weaker countries perceive a low level of cohesion within the alliance, they might resort to self-reliance measures, for example, the pursuit of nuclear weapon development. Conversely, strong cohesion within the alliance will bolster its deterrence against threats, leading to the weaker countries adopting an alliance-reliant policy, such as deeper integration.

The Debate

At the heart of the debate lies the question that if alliance cohesion is susceptible to change, what factors drive the changes in the level of cohesion. General theories on alliance cohesion have mainly focused on the aspects of shared threats and benefits.[5] In other words, a heightened threat level leads to increased alliance cohesion, as alliance members strive to protect their core strategic interests, such as national security, by enhancing the deterrent effect of the alliance. The contributions of member countries to defense capabilities should correspond to their perception of the threat and interests. As a result, alliances facing shared threats and interests will exhibit the highest levels of cohesion.

Based on the same logic, scholars who have studied the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance have primarily approached the issue from the perspective of shared threats and benefits. For example, Bruce Cumings analyzed the historical origins of the alliance, focusing on the Korean War and its aftermath.[6] He argued that the alliance was mainly driven by the US's strategic interests in containing communism during the early Cold War period. His view implies that the US's strategic interests played a pivotal role in forging the alliance's cohesion, as a lack of strong interests might have led to the US's disengagement from the alliance. Similarly, Terence Roehrig focused on the US strategic interests to explain changes in the US–South Korea alliance relations.[7] Meanwhile, Victor Cha highlighted the mutual perception of external threats between the US and South Korea within the alliance relations, suggesting that the alliance has been

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[5] For example, George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962); Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics;* Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9, no. 4 (1985): 3-41; Robert G. Kaufman, "To Balance or To Bandwagon? Alignment Decisions in 1930s Europe," *Security Studies* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 417-447; Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2004).

[6] Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945–1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

[7] Terence Roehrig, *From Deterrence to Engagement: The US Defense Commitment to South Korea* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006).

sustained based on their joint objective of preserving regional stability against potential North Korean threats.[8]

However, this study's historical research finds that the general theories—which argue that alliance cohesion is a derivative of shared threat perceptions and interests—are inadequate in explaining why the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance has changed over time. The history of the US–South Korea alliance reveals that, in some cases, international factors, such as threats and interests, were less important while domestic constraints within the US and South Korea become more important, leading to changes in both the countries' alliance policy and the alliance's cohesion.

The Argument

To the question of what explains the changes in the US–South Korea alliance' cohesion, this study presents two arguments. First, the interplay of international and domestic political-economic factors affected the changes in the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion. As key factors that change alliance cohesion, threats and strategic interests always have a significant impact on countries decisions with regard to their alliance. However, even in situations where shared threats and strategic interests exist, a deterioration of the economic situation and weakening domestic political support can bring about changes in the alliance policies of member countries. When the economic situation worsens, countries must allocate resources considering the priorities of strategic interests, and the distribution of resources requires the support of domestic politics, particularly the consent of their congresses. Consequently, even if the strategic situation does not change, alliance cohesion can change due to shifts in the economic situation and domestic political circumstances of alliance members.

Second, in the asymmetric alliance relationship, the strategic interests and political-economic situation of the US, a major power, have a more significant impact on the alliance cohesion than the situation of South Korea, a minor power. This is because, in a situation where South Korea heavily relies on the US to achieve its security, a reduction in US engagement in the alliance would weaken the alliance's deterrent effect and could lead to a failure to achieve South Korea's security. For the US, the alliance with South Korea is a matter of choice for gaining strategic interests. In contrast, South Korea is always in a position to test the credibility of the US security commitment. As a result, the strategic interests and political-economic situation of the US influence not only its alliance policy but also the alliance policy of South Korea, a minor power closely monitoring the US situation. If the US faces a situation where it would be better to choose a disengagement policy, South Korea, as a minor power, would choose a self-reliant policy such as nuclear weapons development rather than waiting for a situation where it is abandoned by the US and fails in national security. This could result in the erosion of alliance cohesion.

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[8] Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

These arguments highlight often-overlooked mechanisms that influence alliance cohesion in asymmetric alliance contexts. As a result, this study provides valuable contributions to the existing body of research on US–South Korea alliance studies. Furthermore, it holds the potential to be expanded into a general theory of alliance cohesion, particularly if the mechanisms are tested and validated through additional asymmetric alliance cases.

This study conducts an in-depth historical case study on the US–South Korean alliance in the 1960s and 1970s as the periods marked by clear changes in the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion and effectively demonstrated the inadequacy of existing literature focusing on threats and interests and the validity of main arguments of this study. During the early 1960s, several US administrations discussed reducing the number of American troops stationed in South Korea. In response, Seoul deployed combat forces to Vietnam in an effort to prevent the US withdrawal, which resulted in the suspension of the US troop withdrawal. However, the 1970s saw renewed efforts with regard to troop withdrawal under the Nixon administration, and President Carter even advocated for the complete withdrawal of ground troops from Korea. These developments coincided with changes in the US foreign aid policy toward South Korea as well as alterations in the combined command structure. All these events indicate changes in the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion during this period.

Furthermore, the 1960s and 1970s offer valuable case studies for understanding the influence of international and domestic political-economic developments on the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion. During this period, a détente occurred between the US and both China and the Soviet Union at the global level. At the same time, the US and South Korea faced significant regional challenges, including the Vietnam War and tensions with North Korea. This complex interplay of global and regional events provides a rich context for analyzing how evolving threat perceptions and strategic interests affect an alliance's cohesion. Moreover, this period was marked by considerable political, economic, and social changes within both the US and South Korea. Indeed, in the US, the Civil Rights movement, anti-Vietnam War protests, the balance of payments crisis, and the collapse of the Bretton Woods system all significantly impacted the political and economic landscape. For its part, South Korea experienced rapid industrialization and economic growth but faced political instability due to the dictatorship of Park Chung-hee. Therefore, examining the US–South Korea alliance during the 1960s and 1970s can provide valuable insights into the driving forces behind the changes in the alliance cohesion as well as the complex interplay among them, ultimately enriching our understanding of alliance dynamics.

Structure of the Research

The remainder of this study unfolds in the following sequence. In Chapter 2, this study will first provide a comprehensive examination of the key concepts related to alliance cohesion, which will serve as a foundation for understanding the topic. Following that, this chapter will present the key arguments that drive this study. Subsequently, this chapter will discuss the research methods and design that have been utilized in this study. This will include a detailed explanation of the approaches and data collection methods employed.

In Chapter 3, the study examines the process by which the US–South Korea alliance was formed. This chapter discusses the alliance's beginning in 1953 as an asymmetric alliance, with strategic interests, domestic political support, and economic factors being crucial considerations when the US decided to establish it. This chapter also provides background information concerning the upcoming discussion of the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion by discussing its components.

Chapter 4 focuses on how the Cuban Revolution and the reassessment of the global strategic environment shifted the US focus to Latin America, leading to the subsequent debate over troop withdrawals from South Korea. It then discusses the change in the alliance's cohesion while South Korean troops were participating in the Vietnam War. The analysis considers the impact of the shifting geopolitical landscape on the US–South Korea alliance and how both countries navigated their respective strategic goals and interests during this period. Finally, the chapter discusses how the Blue House Raid and the Pueblo Incident of 1968 affected the US calculation of the risk associated with an alliance with South Korea and rekindled the debate over troop withdrawals.

Chapter 5 explores the most critical moments in the US–South Korea alliance's history from 1969 to 1974. Thus, this chapter examines the changes in the alliance's cohesion, with a focus on the negotiation concerning the withdrawal of US troops stationed in South Korea following the announcement of the Nixon Doctrine. It also examines the episode during which the Nixon administration promised to provide military aid to help South Korea modernize its forces, although the US was unable to fulfill this commitment due to congressional opposition. Finally, this chapter discusses how these developments led to South Korea's sense of insecurity, increased risk of abandonment, and pursuit of nuclear armament.

In Chapter 6, this study discusses the process whereby US strategic interests refocused on East Asia following South Vietnam's collapse in 1975. While President Carter advocated for the complete withdrawal of US ground forces from South Korea, this study examines the process by which opposition from Congress and the military prevented this policy from being implemented. This chapter also discusses how the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion was restored, which involved overcoming crises and emphasizing the alliance's resilience and adaptability in response to the changing strategic landscape.

Chapter 7 concludes this study by summarizing the patterns identified by means of historical research. In particular, this study discusses the limitations of mainstream theories, which primarily emphasize balance-of-power dynamics (i.e., the external threat hypothesis), the alliance security dilemma, and the public goods problem. This chapter then demonstrates how considering both international and domestic factors can provide a more comprehensive explanation. The interplay among these factors offers deeper insight into the dynamics within the US–South Korea alliance. Lastly, this chapter discusses the academic and policy implications of the present study, highlighting its relevance for policymakers and scholars interested in alliance formation, maintenance, and transformation.

Chapter 2. Alliance and Cohesion

In this chapter, I delve into the intricacies of defense alliances, specifically focusing on the US–South Korea alliance, and the concept of asymmetric alliances. This chapter begins by clarifying key definitions, such as 'defense alliance' and 'asymmetric alliance,' and then proceeds to explore the notion of alliance cohesion, discussing how to measure alliance cohesion in real-world cases. Through an examination of the US-South Korea alliance's cohesion levels during the 1960s and 1970s, I formulate a central research question: what factors contributed to the changes in the alliance's cohesion during this period? While existing theories, primarily rooted in balance-of-power frameworks, offer some insights, their emphasis on external threats and strategic interests may not fully capture the nuances of the US–South Korea alliance. As such, I raise the possibility that domestic factors could play a significant role in the alliance's cohesion dynamics. To assess the validity of these threat and interest-focused theories and explore the impact of domestic factors, this chapter embarks on an in-depth historical investigation of the US–South Korea alliance.

Defense Alliance

An alliance represents a formal agreement or partnership established between two or more parties, such as countries or organizations, with the aim of working together toward achieving a common goal or objective. In the case of alliances among countries, the forms can vary depending on the motivations of the participants, the extent of their commitment, and the level of institutionalization involved.

In an effort to clarify the different forms that alliances can take, Melvin Small and David Singer categorize formal alliances into three types.[9] First is a defense alliance, in which the signatories pledge to intervene militarily on behalf of any member that comes under attack (e.g., NATO). Second is a neutrality or non-aggression treaty, in which the signatories pledge to remain neutral or to not attack each other (e.g., the Hitler–Stalin Pact[10]). Third is an entente, in which the signatories agree to consult with each other in the event of military contingencies (e.g., the British–French Entente Cordiale of 1904[11]). Among these three types of alliances, defense alliances are considered especially useful tools for countries because achieving national security without support is challenging in the anarchic international politics, where no supranational

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[9] Melvin Small and David Singer, "Formal Alliances, 1816-1965: An Extension of the Basic Data," *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 257-282.

[10] The Hitler–Stalin Pact (also known as the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact) was a non-aggression treaty signed between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany on August 23, 1939.

[11] The Entente Cordiale was a series of agreements signed between the United Kingdom and France on April 8, 1904. The agreements aimed to resolve lingering colonial and diplomatic disputes between the two states and improve their relations, which had been strained for many years. They covered a range of issues, including colonial expansion in Africa and the establishment of a conciliatory diplomatic relationship.

authority exists to prevent the use of violence by one state against another or to enforce promises made between countries.[12] As the US–South Korea alliance takes the form of a defense alliance, it serves as the central focus of this study.

The prevalent perspective considers a defense alliance to be an instrument for integrating countries' capabilities in relation to addressing a common threat, a view that is closely related to the balance-of-power theory. For example, both Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz argue that alliances are formed in response to changes related to the overall distribution of power, while security concerns are the main driver of alliance decisions.[13] Moreover, Morgenthau claims that alliances are a matter of convenience rather than principle, while Waltz posits that countries will enter into alliances with almost anyone if the structural pressure is sufficiently strong. However, due to focusing solely on capabilities, their theories are unable to adequately explain why balancing alliances are rarely formed. They cannot, for example, explain why many countries choose to form an alliance with the US rather than to balance against the US. To overcome this deficiency, Stephen Walt argues that countries seek balance against the most threatening country rather than the most powerful country.[14] In other words, countries form alliances in response to perceived threats to their national security, with the aim being to aggregate resources and military capabilities so as to counteract such threats. Walt also emphasizes that when countries consider threats, they take into account not only relative power, but also geographical proximity, offensive capabilities, and intentions.[15]

The capability-aggression perspective on alliances assumes that allies value one another due to the military support they can provide in times of crisis.[16] According to this perspective, alliances serve as a substitute for domestic sources of military power through increasing the likelihood that allies will send their military forces to defend one another. This expectation of allies' military assistance and intervention is intended to deter potential aggressors from attacking a member country. Should deterrence fail, the massing of the allies' military forces enhances their capacity to defeat a threat during a time of armed conflict.[17] Thus, countries seek allies with relative strength rather than forming alliances with weaker countries, as relative strength implies that member countries will be better supported during times of crisis and that the alliance will have a greater impact. The greater a country's relative capabilities, the more desirable it is as an ally. This type of alliance is known as a symmetric alliance because all the allies receive security-related benefits.[18]

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[12] Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance in Theory and Practice: What Lies Ahead?", *Journal of International Affairs* 43, no. 1 (1989): 1-17.
[13] Hans J. Morgenthau, revised by Kenneth W. Thompson, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Peace and Power, Brief Edition* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1993); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2010).
[14] Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).
[15] Also refer to Walt, "Alliance in Theory and Practice," 1-17.
[16] For instance, Morgenthau, Waltz, and Walt.
[17] Michaela Mattes, "Reputation, Symmetry, and Alliance Design," *International Organization* 66, no. 4 (2012): 683.
[18] James D. Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances," *American Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (1991): 904-933.

Asymmetric Alliance

In contrast to symmetric alliances, asymmetric alliances are formed between countries with unequal military capabilities, political influence, and economic resources. As a result, in an asymmetric alliance, one country may play a significantly greater role than the other—that is, one country may be more reliant on the other for its national security.[19]

Imagine an international system in which there are no alliances and every country depends only on its own military capabilities for its national security, which increases as its national capabilities increase. The major powers in such a system would be more secure than the minor powers due to their stronger military capabilities as well as greater economic capacity to build further military capabilities in the future. Of course, some major powers may be less secure if their vital interests are significantly threatened by particular adversaries, whereas some minor powers may be more secure if their interests are not threatened due to them being located in a benign strategic environment—that is, an environment in which there are no rivals or challenges. In general, however, the minor powers are likely to have lower levels of security if they face strong regional rivals and competitive geopolitical circumstances. Such a situation would create a set of problems for the minor powers, such as increased uncertainty, the potential for militarized disputes with rivals, and the transaction costs associated with trading with other countries. As a consequence, the minor powers may wish to form alliances with the major powers in an attempt to enhance their security.[20] In other words, the minor powers may be incentivized to form asymmetric security alliances with the major powers due to lacking sufficient capabilities to ensure their own national security without the assistance of the stronger countries.[21]

Yet, being protected by a powerful country (or patron) is not a simple matter, as a weaker country (or client) must pay a price to form an alliance with a major power. This implies that, in order to form an alliance with a major power, a minor power must sacrifice a portion of its autonomy—the so-called "security-autonomy tradeoff."[22] This is the cost a minor power must pay to form a defense alliance with a major power. A country's autonomy can be defined as the extent to which it seeks alterations in the status quo, demonstrates external self-assertion, and has the ability to decide its own policies.[23] The more a country is able to change its status quo in relation to other countries either diplomatically or militarily based on its own decisions, the greater its autonomy. In the field of international politics, autonomy is important because it helps to ensure that countries have the ability to act in accordance with their own interests and values rather than being beholden to external actors or forces. In other words, countries with low levels

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[19] Yaechan Lee, "Riding the Ride: Assessing South Korea's Hedging Strategy through Regional Security Initiatives," *The Pacific Review* 35, no. 5 (2021): 3; Victor D. Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia: The United States, Japan, and Korea," *International Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2000): 265.

[20] David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), Ch. 5.

[21] Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia"; Benjamin O. Fordham, "Trade and Asymmetric Alliances," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 6 (2010): 685-696; Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry," 904-933; Kevin Sweeney and Paul Fritz, "Jumping on the Bandwagon: An Interest-Based Explanation for Great Power Alliances," *Journal of Politics* 66, no. 2 (2004): 428-449.

[22] Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry."

[23] Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry," 908-909.

of autonomy are more likely to be susceptible to external pressure and influence. In this regard, in practice, a country's autonomy may determine whether it can independently possess offensive forces and military plans as well as whether it can independently pursue coalitions with other countries or engage in conflicts with adversaries.[24]

In the context of asymmetric alliance dynamics, the security-autonomy tradeoff refers to the situation in which a minor power may have to choose between enhancing its national security by giving up some degree of autonomy or maintaining its autonomy at the cost of potentially reducing its national security. For example, a minor power may decide to remain non-aligned and so maintain its autonomy, although in doing so, it may endanger its security by not having access to the protection and support afforded by an alliance with a major power. By contrast, a minor power may decide to join a defense alliance with a major power in order to enhance its security. However, in doing so, it may have to surrender some of its independence in relation to foreign policy and military operations.

A minor power's strategy for attaining security through forming an alliance with a major power is not without risk. For instance, if the major power proves unwilling to fulfill its security commitments to its minor ally, then the minor power will be more vulnerable to external threats due to having given up some of its independent capabilities in an effort to achieve national security via the alliance. Thus, in asymmetric alliance dynamics, a minor power generally faces greater fear of abandonment by its major power ally. When joining an asymmetric alliance, in essence, a minor power must weigh the benefits of increased security against the costs of decreased autonomy.

The situation is different for major powers. Regional threats generally have a greater impact on minor powers due to their geographical proximity, intentions, and capabilities, whereas major powers may perceive such threats as less severe and find themselves relatively less impacted. As a result, major powers may establish asymmetric alliances with minor powers due to strategic interests stemming from the partnership rather than in response to local threats. That is, while the minor powers in asymmetric alliances mainly pursue security interests, the major powers have a range of interests that drive them to form alliances with weaker allies.[25] For example, once its regional security goal is achieved, a major power may seek to establish balances of power in other regions in order to prevent the emergence of hegemonic powers and potential challengers to its status.[26] In addition, the protection of globally stretched economic interests is a crucial objective for major powers, as such economic networks sustain their military capabilities and power status in the long run. Doing so should also protect vital resources and transportation routes, meaning that major powers must secure key strategic locations within each region. All

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[24] Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 2.

[25] Terence Roehrig, *From Deterrence to Engagement: The US Defense Commitment to South Korea* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 9-10.

[26] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001).

these strategic interests represent important motivations for major powers to form asymmetric alliances with minor powers at strategic points within a given region.[27]

However, a major power's alliance strategy is also associated with a set of risks. For instance, if its minor power allies retain high levels of autonomy, a major power's security guarantee may create a moral hazard whereby the minor powers have an incentive to engage in riskier actions than would otherwise be deemed prudent.[28] Indeed, a commitment that is too strong could encourage the minor power allies to engage in aggressive behaviors if they have sufficient autonomy to decide their own policies. Such a situation may increase the major power's fear of becoming entrapped with risk-taking allies whose actions could drag it into an unwanted war. Furthermore, the establishment of an asymmetric alliance with minor powers requires a major power to take on additional expenses due to its involvement in the security of the minor powers requiring the use of its resources. For example, it will likely be required to provide military assistance to deter the minor powers' regional rivals from using force or to defeat them in the event of war. Such assistance involves the deployment of the major power's forces and the provision of both arms and direct financial support to the minor allies. The cost of deploying and operating tens of thousands of troops and pieces of equipment overseas is substantial.[29] Moreover, a major power's troop deployment to a weaker ally would reduce its own strategic flexibility. This means that when a major power is tied to a minor power as a result of an alliance, some of its military forces may be unavailable for use in other conflicts, which would lead to increased costs. For example, if the US military is committed to South Korea, then it may be unable to respond effectively to conflicts in other regions such as Vietnam, Iraq, or Taiwan. This cost arises because even major powers have limited military resources that must be used efficiently.

In short, a minor power may form an asymmetric alliance with a major power due to facing significant local threats to its national security and having only limited ability to maintain stability independently. Yet, the minor power must consider the risk of abandonment, as it will be required to sacrifice some of its autonomy and could potentially face increased costs in relation to securing its national interests if the major power withdraws its support.[30] Conversely, a major power may enter into an asymmetric alliance with a minor power due to strategic

[27] John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior US Grand Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 4 (July/August 2016): 70-83.

[28] Keren Yarhi-Milo, Alexander Lanoszka, and Zack Cooper, "To Arm or to Ally? The Patron's Dilemma and the Strategic Logic of Arms Transfers and Alliances," *International Security* 41, no. 2 (2016): 94; Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 10.

[29] For example, according to the Government Accountability Office, between 2016 and 2019, the US spent more than $34 billion on maintaining a military presence of approximately 80,000 troops and related equipment in Japan and South Korea. During the same period, Japan and South Korea together contributed more than $18 billion to the US military presence. If the US alone had been responsible for the entire budget, it would have exceeded $52 billion over the course of those four years. Government Accountability Office, *Burden Sharing: Benefits and Costs Associated with the US Military Presence in Japan and South Korea* (Washington: Government Accountability Office, 2021), March 17, 2021, https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-21-270.

[30] Abandonment is a form of defection that involves failing to make good on explicit commitments or provide support in contingencies where support is expected. See Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (1984): 466; Victor D. Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia: The United States, Japan, and Korea," *International Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2000): 265.

interests associated with the partnership. Nevertheless, the major power must be cautious of the risk of entrapment, as it may incur costs when maintaining its commitment, lose strategic flexibility, and potentially be drawn into unwanted local conflicts.[31] In all, asymmetric alliances can be defined by differences among member countries in threat perception, levels of military and economic power, and interests, which shape the reliance, urgency, and goals of the partners involved in the alliance.[32]

The concept of a defense and asymmetric alliance is particularly relevant to the case of the US–South Korea alliance. First, it is a defense alliance because it was primarily established for the purpose of mutual defense and deterrence. From its inception, the primary goal of the alliance has been to deter North Korea from launching another invasion as well as to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. Second, it is an asymmetric alliance because asymmetry exists between the two countries in terms of their national power, threat perceptions, and interests. The US has maintained its status as a global superpower since the formation of the alliance, while South Korea, despite its impressive economic growth, has remained a regional power in East Asia. The primary goal of the US–South Korea alliance is to deter North Korea, although the associated threat is perceived to be more significant by South Korea than by the US due to the North having only limited capabilities to pose a direct threat to the US mainland. Moreover, the two countries have different motivations and interests when it comes to participating in the alliance, with South Korea primarily seeking security benefits and the US seeking strategic benefits, including South Korea's location as an outpost preventing communist expansion and its role as a bulwark of democracy.

Alliance Cohesion

Now that the nature of the US–South Korea alliance has been established, it is important to consider the concept of alliance cohesion, which is the main focus of the present research. The phenomenon of group cohesion has garnered significant attention from scholars in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, psychology, and international relations, and while each discipline

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[31] Entrapment entails being dragged into a unwanted conflict over an ally's interests that one does not share, or shares only partially. See Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," 467; Cha "Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia," 265.

[32] Specifically, in an asymmetric alliance, one partner may perceive a more significant or immediate threat than the other. This difference in perception can lead to an imbalance in the urgency or priority each ally assigns to the alliance. The less threatened partner may be more willing to provide support to the more threatened partner to counterbalance the perceived threat, while the more threatened partner may be more reliant on the alliance for security and survival. Moreover, asymmetric alliances often form when there is a significant disparity in military and economic capabilities between the partners. The stronger partner may provide protection or other benefits to the weaker partner in exchange for political support, access to resources, or strategic advantages. The weaker partner, in turn, relies on the stronger partner's military and economic capabilities for security and development, making the alliance crucial for its well-being. Lastly, differences in interests can also contribute to the formation of asymmetric alliances. One partner may have broader strategic objectives, while the other may have more localized or specific interests. The alliance can be beneficial to both parties by helping them achieve their respective goals. The stronger partner may gain political influence, access to resources, or strategic positioning, while the weaker partner may receive protection, economic assistance, or support for its specific interests.

has its own agenda, the following three questions underlie such studies. What factors draw countries together? What maintains strong bonds? What effects does cohesion have?

Despite the importance of these questions, the answers in the case of alliances remain unclear. One key issue is the divergence among scholars regarding the meaning of cohesion. For example, Walt conceptualizes alliance cohesion by associating it with the duration for which an alliance has been maintained.[33] This is because a long-lasting alliance is more likely to be associated with higher levels of institutionalization, domestic support, hegemonic leadership, and ideological solidarity.[34] However, duration alone is not a sufficient indicator of alliance cohesion because there are cases in which alliances that have existed for extended periods of time have failed to achieve their intended purposes. A clear example of this is the French–Polish Military Alliance signed in 1921 in response to the evolving security situation in Europe following the end of World War I, which lasted for approximately two decades.[35] Yet, despite its longevity, France was unable to provide significant military support to Poland during the German–Polish War of 1939, highlighting how duration is not necessarily indicative of alliance cohesion.

Moreover, Walt's conceptualization has only limited utility when examining the relation between alliance cohesion and alliance effectiveness. In other words, Walt suggests that a longer duration of an alliance is likely to indicate stronger cohesion; however, he does not explain the relationship between the level of cohesion and the alliance's effectiveness in deterring potential threats and providing defense. For this reason, I adopt a behavioral conceptualization of alliance cohesion—that is, how effectively allies are able to coordinate their goals and strategies toward attaining external goals—a definition suggested by Ole Holsti, Terrence Hopmann, and John Sullivan.[36] This definition implies that the essence of alliance cohesion lies in an alliance's ability to ensure all member countries are pulling in the same direction and to effectively achieve its external goals.[37] A high degree of alliance cohesion can lead to better decision-making, more efficient use of resources, and an increased deterrent effect. By contrast, a low degree of alliance cohesion can lead to disagreements and ineffective responses to threats. In the case of a defense alliance, the primary goal is to deter and defend against military attacks by adversaries. Thus, in a cohesive defense alliance, member countries cooperate effectively and work together via the implementation of measures that produce deterrent and defense effects.

Given the above, what are the characteristics of strong alliance cohesion in the context of defense alliances, where allies effectively coordinate to deter aggression and defend if attacked? I

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[33] Stephen M. Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," *Survival* 39, no. 1 (1997): 156-179.

[34] Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," 158-170.

[35] The French–Polish Military Alliance was a mutual defense treaty signed between France and Poland in February 1921. It obligated the signatories to come to each other's aid in the event of an attack by Germany. The alliance was seen as a way for France to deter potential German aggression and achieve balance against the German military threat. However, when Nazi Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, France did not provide military support to its ally. Not only was the French army not fully prepared to engage in a major conflict, but there was also a lack of political will among the French leadership to go to war, as they were still haunted by the massive casualties suffered during World War I. In the end, France did declare war on Germany; however, by then it was too late to assist Poland, which had already fallen to the invading German forces.

[36] Ole R. Holsti, P. Terrence Hopmann, and John D. Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), 16; Patricia A. Weitsman, "Alliances and War," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, ed. Renee Marlin-Bennett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.

[37] Holsti, Hopmann, and Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances*, 16.

propose there to be five indicators for measuring the level of cohesion. These indicators have been chosen because they capture the critical aspects of cooperation, commitment, and capability sharing among allies, which are all essential for a successful and effective alliance. The five indicators are as follows:

- Formal treaty: The existence of a formal treaty between allied countries serves as a vital indicator of cohesion, as it represents a clear and mutually agreed upon commitment. Such a legal document facilitates a common understanding of the alliance's objectives, member countries' expectations, and the related coordination and decision-making mechanisms. A formal treaty conveys a sense of permanence as well as an intent to adhere to the agreed terms, thereby fostering trust and reliability among allies.
- Dedication: The degree of dedication, including the levels of military presence and financial aid, reflects allied countries' commitment to the alliance's objectives. A high level of dedication indicates that allies are willing to allocate resources, invest in infrastructure, and provide support to ensure the alliance's goals are achieved. This high level of investment not only reinforces the bond among allies, but also sends a strong signal to potential adversaries that the alliance is prepared and capable of defending its interests.
- Burden-sharing: The extent of burden-sharing, such as the equitable assumption of defense responsibilities among allied countries, is a crucial indicator of cohesion. When responsibilities are fairly shared, it demonstrates unity and mutual trust among allies. Equitable burden-sharing also helps to prevent resentment or perceptions of exploitation, which could undermine the alliance's overall cohesion and effectiveness.
- Consultative mechanism: The existence of a consultative mechanism for discussing and coordinating strategic goals is essential for maintaining and enhancing alliance cohesion. Such a mechanism enables allies to communicate effectively, resolve disputes, and adjust strategies in response to evolving security environments. A robust consultative mechanism also fosters transparency and trust among allies, thereby promoting a shared understanding of each member country's needs, expectations, and capabilities.
- Military integration: The degree of military integration, including the effectiveness of command and communication structures, is a vital indicator of alliance cohesion. Effective military integration allows for efficient coordination of allied forces, enabling them to act as a unified entity in the face of threats. Such integration not only improves the alliance's overall operational effectiveness, but also enhances the level of trust and confidence on the part of allies in their combined capabilities.

These five indicators are both relevant and significant for measuring alliance cohesion because they address the key aspects of an effective alliance. Together, they foster a comprehensive understanding of the cohesiveness of a defense alliance, which is crucial when it comes to achieving its security goals and deterring potential aggressors.

Research Question

Based on the above discussion, I argue that the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance is not a constant factor; rather, it is a variable that changes depending on the situation and over time.

During the 1960s, the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance showed a tendency to decrease. There were several reasons for this. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson considered reducing the numbers of US troops stationed on the Korean Peninsula and gradually decreasing both military and economic aid to South Korea. US aid to South Korea amounted to 17.6 percent of the total US aid budget in 1956, although it decreased to 7.3 percent in 1962, Kennedy's second year in office.[38] At that time, there was no consultative mechanism within the alliance framework, meaning that Seoul had no choice but to comply with unilateral US decisions. Meanwhile, South Korea's deployment of combat troops to Vietnam, which began in 1965, marked a turning point in terms of the alliance's cohesion. As South Korea shared with the US the burden of containing communist expansion in Southeast Asia, Washington promised not to reduce the numbers of its troops stationed in Korea while South Korea sent combat troops to participate in the Vietnam War. During the same period, US aid to South Korea increased from $309 million in 1965 to more than double that amount, some $799 million, in 1969.[39] However, this apparent recovery of alliance cohesion was hamstrung by the Blue House Raid and the Pueblo Incident in 1968. Seoul raised concerns about Washington's lack of an active response to Pyongyang's provocations, whereas Washington concluded that due to President Park's hawkishness and irrationality, any crisis could escalate on the Korean Peninsula, potentially causing the US to become entrapped in unwanted and undesired conflicts. As a result, Cyrus Vance, who visited Seoul as Johnson's special envoy, recommended that US troops play a "diminishing role" in South Korea as an aspect of the new US policy direction toward Korea.[40]

The 1970s saw a continuation of the situation that had characterized the late 1960s, and it was also the period in which the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance faced its biggest crisis. In 1971, Washington withdrew the 7th Infantry Division, one of two divisions previously stationed in South Korea. For Seoul, Washington's unilateral decision in this regard came as a surprise. Indeed, the Nixon administration only informed Seoul after it had already made the decision and then pressured President Park to agree, stating that the US would unilaterally withdraw its troops without any complementary measures if Seoul did not do so. Although Washington promised a significant increase in military aid to assist with modernizing the South Korean military in order not to upset the military balance after the withdrawal of the 7th Division, the promised aid was not delivered, except for in 1971 and 1972. Thus, South Korea could no longer rely on US security assurances and so decided to launch a domestic nuclear program in an effort to obtain its own deterrent.

After the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion gradually recovered from its lowest status during the early 1970s. First, there was no major change in the level of US forces stationed in South Korea. In fact, although President Carter strongly pushed his policy of troop withdrawal, it did not result in a major withdrawal of US troops from South Korea, except for the 3,600 troops withdrawn in 1978. Moreover, the US continued (and actually

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[38] USAID, "Foreign Assistance Data," ForeignAssistance.gov, accessed February 26, 2023, https://www.foreignassistance.gov/data; Emily M. Morgenstern and Nick M. Brown, "Foreign Assistance: An Introduction to U.S. Programs and Policy," CRS Report, R40213, Congressional Research Service, last updated January 10, 2022, https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R40213.

[39] USAID, "Foreign Assistance Data."

[40] "Memorandum From Cyrus R. Vance to President Johnson," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968,* Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d181.

increased) its military assistance to South Korea in the form of direct aid and loans, foreign military sales, and the transfer of equipment. In the meantime, institutional features also helped to strengthen the alliance's cohesion. The annual Security Consultative Meeting (SCM), which was formalized in 1971, continued to serve as a consultative mechanism for strategic decision-making between the two countries, while the establishment of the US–South Korea Combined Forces Command (CFC) in 1978 allowed for the better integration of military power between them. Additionally, US assistance further increased the South Korean defense of the Korean Peninsula, making the alliance into a labor- and cost-sharing relationship. This implied a shift in the defense posture from the US taking primary responsibility to a labor-sharing system in which South Korea and the US jointly assumed responsibility. As a consequence, it had the effect of lowering the cost of US intervention in the event of a crisis on the Korean Peninsula. Furthermore, South Korea gave up on its aspirations to develop nuclear weapons in 1976, which stemmed from low confidence in the US security commitment, and decided to rely on the US nuclear umbrella.

The preceding discussion demonstrates that, during the 1960s and 1970s, the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance underwent significant changes. This study seeks to understand the factors behind those changes and their implications for the alliance. Thus, the main research question that informs the study is as follows. *What were the key factors that influenced the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance during the 1960s and 1970s, and how did those factors interact to shape the changes seen in the alliance's cohesion?*

Existing Theories

In exploring the dynamics of the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion, there are three primary and relevant theoretical strands that provide a foundation for our analysis. These perspectives are largely grounded in balance-of-power theory and emphasize external threats and strategic interests as the key determinants of alliance cohesion.

The first theoretical perspective, known as the external threat hypothesis, posits that nations collaborate to counter challenges posed by foreign powers. As the threat level intensifies, alliance cohesion increases, as member countries attempt to improve their security by bolstering the alliance's deterrent effect. Members' contributions to defense capabilities should align with their perception of the threat and interests. Thus, cohesive balancing alliances, characterized by shared threats and interests, are the strongest types of alliances.[41]

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[41] Related theoretical studies include George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962); Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics;* Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9, no. 4 (1985): 3-41; Robert G. Kaufman, "To Balance or To Bandwagon? Alignment Decisions in 1930s Europe," *Security Studies* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 417-447; Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2004).

The second perspective, the alliance dilemma hypothesis, also stems from the balancing theory but emphasizes intra-alliance tensions rather than external threats. It argues that alliance cohesion depends on the leading country's coercive potential and its capacity to encourage cooperation among weaker partners, making this hypothesis particularly relevant to asymmetric alliances. Members face an alliance dilemma when determining their commitment to the alliance, with the central concern being fears of abandonment and entrapment. The risks of abandonment and entrapment are inversely related; reducing one typically increases the other. If a country boosts its commitment to the alliance to alleviate allies' fear of abandonment, the risk of entrapment rises, as this strong commitment might embolden allies to undertake actions that contradict the leading partner's preferences during crises. Conversely, if a country reduces its commitment to minimize entrapment risk, it heightens allies' fear of abandonment. This inverse relationship underscores the alliance dilemma's central issue: a country's security-enhancing actions may decrease entrapment risk but create intra-alliance friction by increasing allies' fear of abandonment. This perspective posits that the emergence of the alliance dilemma, which involves concerns of abandonment and entrapment, can potentially weaken the cohesion within an alliance.[42]

The third perspective, the collective action and burden-sharing hypothesis, suggests that a major power's reduced contribution to an alliance's defense capability due to its national power decline may erode alliance cohesion. To maintain cohesion, minor powers should increase their contributions (or burden-sharing), or the alliance will suffer cohesion erosion. This hypothesis assumes that minor powers consistently contribute less than their fair share to the alliance's collective security, as they "free ride" on the major power. Despite the unequal contribution, the major power sustains the asymmetric alliance because the strategic benefits of providing collective security surpass the economic costs. However, if the major power experiences a decline in national power and can no longer economically support collective security, it will decrease its alliance contribution. In this scenario, minor powers must assume a more significant burden-sharing role to maintain the alliance with the major power, preventing cohesion erosion.[43]

While the external threat and strategic interest-focused theories provide valuable insights into the dynamics of alliance cohesion, they may not fully capture the complexities of the US-South Korea alliance. Given the unique historical, political, and economic context of this bilateral relationship, it is crucial to consider the potential influence of domestic political and economic factors on the alliance's cohesion. For instance, changes in political leadership, domestic public opinion, and economic conditions in both countries may significantly impact the alliance's

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[42] Related theoretical studies include Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics"; Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Victor D. Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia: The United States, Japan, and Korea," *International Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2000): 261-291; Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* 44, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 137-168.
[43] Related theoretical and empirical studies include John R. Oneal, "The Theory of Collective Action and Burden Sharing in NATO," *International organization* 44, no. 3 (1990): 379-402; Todd Sandler, "The Economic Theory of Alliances: A Survey," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37, no. 3 (1993): 446-483; John R. Oneal and Paul F. Diehl, "The Theory of Collective Action and NATO Defense Burdens: New Empirical Tests," *Political Research Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (1994): 373-396; Todd Sandler and Keith Hartley, "Economics of Alliances: The Lessons for Collective Action," *Journal of Economic Literature* 39, no. 3 (2001): 869-896.

strength and trajectory. Therefore, a more comprehensive analysis of the US–South Korea alliance cohesion is warranted, incorporating domestic factors alongside systemic level analysis to provide a more nuanced understanding of the alliance's evolution and challenges.

Research Methods and Design

To test validity of the existing theories and examine the role of domestic factors in the US-South Korea alliance relations, this study combines inductive reasoning and the applied history method with a dynamic approach to international relations.

Inductive Reasoning and Applied History Methods

Applied history refers to the practice of drawing on historical knowledge and insights to inform contemporary decision-making, policymaking, and scholarly research. Moreover, the key principles of applied history include the use of historical case studies to uncover patterns, the systematic comparison of past and present situations, and the critical examination of historical analogies. Through engaging with the past, applied history seeks to illuminate the present and offer guidance for the future, recognizing that history may not repeat itself exactly but still provide valuable lessons and insights. [44] When using the applied history method, inductive reasoning is seen as a vital approach, as it helps researchers to move from specific historical events to general insights that can be used to address contemporary challenges and inform current decision-making. Through identifying patterns and lessons from the past, inductive reasoning allows applied history to offer valuable guidance on navigating the complexities of present-day international relations.

The use of inductive and applied history methods is associated with several advantages. First, it enables researchers to draw on a wealth of historical data and experiences, thereby allowing for a richer and more nuanced understanding of complex phenomena. Second, applied history encourages a long-term perspective, fostering an appreciation of the enduring patterns and processes that shape international relations. Third, applied history promotes a more critical and reflective approach to the study of international relations due to challenging researchers to question conventional wisdom and assumptions regarding the nature of international politics and the dynamics of alliances.

For these reasons, inductive reasoning and applied history has been used in a significant body of international relations research, including the study of great power rivalries, the evolution of the

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[44] See Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (New York: Free Press, 1986); Graham Allison and Niall Ferguson, "Applied History Manifesto," Applied History Project, Harvard Kennedy School (2016); Harm Kaal and Jelle van Lottum, "Applied History: Past, Present, and Future," *Journal of Applied History* 3, no. 1-2 (2021): 135-154; Niall Ferguson, "Applying History In Real Time: A Tale Of Two Crises," *Journal of Applied History* 1 (2022): 1-18.

international system, and the dynamics of alliance formation and cohesion. For example, Paul Kennedy's seminal work, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, employs applied history to analyze the long-term patterns of great power competition and decline.[45] Similarly, Michael Doyle's *Empires* also employs inductive and applied historical approaches, as he first examines three historical cases to derive general hypotheses concerning the various forms of empires.[46] Another example of the use of inductive reasoning can be seen in Charles P. Kindleberger's book, *Manias, Panics and Crashes,* wherein he draws a pattern of financial crisis based on an examination of the monetary history of the last four hundred years.[47]

In this study, the inductive and applied historical approach is employed to analyze the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion, with a focus on how historical events, patterns, and processes have shaped the alliance's evolution. Through examining key episodes in the alliance's history, this study gains a deeper understanding of the factors that have influenced its cohesion, including changes in the international and domestic environments; the interplay of political, economic, and strategic interests; and the role of political leaders and institutions. Furthermore, the use of applied history allows this study to critically assess the lessons and insights that can be derived from the alliance's past experiences, which informs our understanding of its current dynamics and future prospects.

Dynamic Approach to International Relations

The dynamic approach to international relations refers to the study of how the interactions among key variables within the international system evolve over time, shaped by complex and interrelated processes. The key principles of the dynamic approach include the recognition that the field of international politics is constantly changing, the importance of considering both short- and long-term developments, and the need to examine the interplay among various factors, such as political, economic, and social forces, in shaping both state behavior and the international system.[48] Such dynamics approach is distinct from the static approach, such as Stephen Walt's, which tends to focus on the persistence of certain patterns in international politics, prioritize specific factors, and analyze snapshots in time.[49]

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[45] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of The Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1987).

[46] Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986).

[47] Charles P. Kindleberger and Robert Z. Aliber, *Manias, Panics and Crashes. A History of Financial Crisis*, 5th edition (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005).

[48] Richard Rosecrance, "The Failure of Static and the Need for Dynamic Approaches to International Relations," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[49] Specifically, the static approach to IR often assumes that the underlying structure of the international system remains relatively stable, leading to consistent patterns of state behavior. Moreover, this approach often focuses on one or a few key factors, such as the balance of power or the distribution of capabilities among states, as the primary determinants of state behavior and international outcomes. It may downplay or ignore other factors that could also shape international relations. Lastly, the static approach often examines international politics at specific points in time, rather than tracking changes and developments over longer periods. It may be less concerned with explaining how and why the international system evolves.

Applying a dynamic approach to international relations research offers several benefits. First, it enables researchers to capture the complexity of international politics, thereby avoiding the oversimplification that may result from static analyses. Second, the dynamic approach encourages a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of international relations by considering the interplay among the various forces and factors that drive state behavior and the evolution of the international system. Third, the dynamic approach promotes a forward-looking perspective, as it seeks to identify emerging trends and challenges that may shape the future of international relations.

The dynamic approach has been employed in various aspects of international relations research, including the study of power transitions, regional security dynamics, and the evolution of international institutions. For example, Robert Gilpin's *War and Change in World Politics* adopts a dynamic perspective when analyzing the rise and fall of great powers as well as the implications of power transitions for the international system.[50] Similarly, Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver's *Regions and Powers* employs a dynamic approach to examine the changing security dynamics in different regions of the world.[51] Another example can be seen in T.J. Pempel's *A Region of Regimes*, as the book explains how the interplay among political and economic factors—domestic institutions, socio-economic resources, and external support—has created distinctive types of regimes in East Asia.[52]

In this study, the dynamic approach is applied to analyze the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion, with a focus on how the alliance has evolved over time as a result of the interplay among international and domestic factors. Through examining the changes in the alliance's cohesion that have occurred in response to shifts in the international environment, domestic political developments, and the evolving strategic interests of both the US and South Korea, this study develops a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that shape the alliance. Furthermore, the dynamic approach allows this study to identify potential challenges and opportunities facing the US–South Korea alliance in the future, which could inform policy debates and research on the alliance's resilience and adaptability in a rapidly changing world.

Research Design for the Study of the US–South Korea Alliance's Cohesion

The research design used for the study of the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion employs a combination of the applied history method and the dynamic approach to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors shaping the alliance's cohesion over time. The primary data source for the related case studies is the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) archive, which is maintained by the US Department of State and offers a comprehensive collection of primary source materials. However, as the FRUS archive only covers up to the Ford administration, additional data concerning the Carter administration is obtained from reliable

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[50] Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[51] Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[52] T.J. Pempel, *A Region of Regimes: Prosperity and Plunder in the Asia-Pacific* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021).

secondary sources, including academic articles, books, and government reports. This combination of primary and secondary sources ensures a thorough and balanced examination of the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion during the critical period. The case selection process focuses on significant events and periods that have influenced the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance since its inception in 1953, with a particular emphasis on the 1960s and 1970s as a pivotal era of change.

The applied history method and dynamic approach are integrated in the research design by combining historical case studies with a focus on both the changing dynamics of the international system and the role of domestic factors. More specifically, applied history is employed to identify and analyze key historical events and decisions that have shaped the US–South Korea alliance, while the dynamic approach is used to examine the broader context in which these events took place, including the evolving strategic environment, shifting power relations, and interplay among domestic and international factors. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that have contributed to the alliance's cohesion and its evolution over time.

The research design's inclusion of a combination of the applied history method and the dynamic approach is expected to contribute significantly to the understanding of the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion. By analyzing historical case studies within the broader context of the changing international system and the role of domestic factors, this study aims to reveal robust patterns and trends in terms of alliance cohesion. Additionally, the research design provides a framework for comparing the US–South Korea alliance with other asymmetric alliances, thereby enhancing understanding of the factors that contribute to alliance cohesion more broadly. Ultimately, this study seeks to inform policymakers and scholars about the complexities and dynamics of alliance relationships, offering valuable insights for the future management of the US–South Korea alliance and similar security partnerships.

Chapter 3. Origin

Formation of the US–South Korea Defense Alliance

US–South Korea relations began in the late nineteenth century, although the ties between the two states were initially minimal. In fact, many South Koreans view the US as having abandoned Korea to Japan and occupation during those early years. After World War II, Korea reappeared on Washington's radar despite US officials being poorly prepared to deal with the tumult that characterized Korean politics following the end of the war. South Korea remained a relatively low priority for the US during the early postwar years, but in 1950 it vaulted to the top of the list after North Korea's invasion. US leaders had believed that a war with the Soviet Union was likely to begin in Europe, but following the invasion Korea was suddenly positioned on the frontline of the Cold War. After the cessation of the Korean War, Seoul and Washington sought to deter communist aggression by forming an alliance, which has since been central to maintaining peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. This chapter discusses how the US–South Korea alliance evolved with the aim of addressing the concerns and interests of both states while also ensuring their mutual security throughout the Cold War.

World War II and the Division of Korea

During World War II, the US and other Allied countries showed little interest in Korea.[53] Consequently, little consideration and almost no time were dedicated to planning Korea's future, meaning that hasty decisions were made after the war ended. For instance, two US Army colonels, C. H. Bonesteel III and Dean Rusk, developed a plan to have the US accept the Japanese surrender.[54] Both men were aware that Soviet forces were already present in Manchuria and that it would take several weeks for US forces to arrive on the peninsula. Thus, they suggested that Moscow accept the surrender of Japanese forces in Korea. The US proposal sought to prevent Moscow from rejecting the US occupation outright and dominating the process of Korean surrender. Bonesteel and Rusk recommended that the 38th parallel serve as a line dividing the peninsula into the Soviet-occupied North and the US-occupied South. "It was

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[53] At the Cairo conference in November 1943, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Chiang Kai-shek met and agreed to the "Cairo Declaration," which outlined plans for the postwar order in Asia. Arguably, this represented the only attention Korea received during the war. Concerning Korea, the declaration stated that the allies, being "mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent." See "Final Text of the Communique, November 26, 1943," in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers,* the Conferences at Cairo and Teheran, 1943 (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1961), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1943CairoTehran/d343.

[54] "Draft Memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff," in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers,* 1945, the British Commonwealth, the Far East, Volume VI (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1969), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v06/d771.

further north than could be realistically reached by US forces in the event of Soviet disagreement," Rusk admitted, although he believed in the plan because he "*felt* it important to include the capital of Korea in the area of responsibility of American troops [emphasis added]."[55] Moscow accepted the plan, much to Rusk's surprise, despite the likelihood that Stalin would have insisted on a line further south, something that the US would have been able to do little about.[56]

The US and the Soviet Union occupied Korea for the following three years. Moscow and Washington made multiple unsuccessful attempts to unify the two parts of the country. As the Cold War intensified, the US pushed the issue of unification with the United Nations (UN) in an effort to break the impasse. On November 14, 1947, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 112, which was intended to reunite the two zones and trigger elections throughout the Korean Peninsula. Washington advocated for a single administrative entity for the whole of Korea, whereas the Soviets were committed to the country's permanent partition.[57] As a consequence, Pyongyang and Moscow refused to hold elections in their zone, although the South agreed to do so, leading to the establishment of the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea) on August 15, 1948, with Syngman Rhee serving as its first president. Soon after, the Soviets constituted a government in the North led by Kim Il Sung, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) was established on September 9, 1948.

The US military occupied South Korea until June 1949, when the US troop withdrawal left behind less than 500 advisors. Rhee was disappointed with the US force withdrawals, not only because Korea remained split, but also because he feared that the country would be vulnerable to communist forces in the absence of US troops. Rhee pleaded with Washington to provide South Korea with heavy weapons such as aircraft and tanks with which to counter a possible North Korean invasion.[58] However, Washington was concerned that Rhee would use such weapons to launch his own invasion of the North, as he made no secret of his desire to achieve unification.[59] In October 1948, the Soviet Union withdrew from the North, although the Soviets continued to provide North Korea with tanks and artillery. Subsequently, inter-Korean relations worsened and border tensions intensified, leading to multiple small-scale armed conflicts.[60]

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[55] "Draft Memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

[56] In the draft memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Rusk states, "I remember at the time that I was somewhat surprised that the Soviet accepted the 38th parallel since I thought they might insist upon a line further south in view of our respective military positions in the area." See "Draft Memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

[57] The Soviet forces in North Korea proposed a pro-Soviet republic for workers and farmers in the north. The 1993 disclosure of Stalin's secret command to Soviet forces in North Korea revealed Russia's aim of maintaining the peninsula's permanent partition. See Special Reporting Team, "When Did the Division Start to Harden?," *Dong-A Ilbo*, October 10, 2004, https://www.donga.com/news/Politics/article/all/20041010/8115339/1.

[58] James F. Schnabel and Robert J. Watson, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy 1950-1951: The Korean War Part One* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, 1988), 10.

[59] Victor D. Cha, "Informal Empire: The Origins of the U.S.-ROK Alliance and the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty Negotiations," *Korean Studies* 41 (2017): 227; James Matray, *The Reluctant Crusade: American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941–1950* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 173; Uk Heo and Terence Roehrig, *The Evolution of the South Korea–US Alliance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 58.

[60] According to the South Korean Army History Department, in 1949, there were 610 armed conflicts between the South and the North, which resulted in more than 1,500 deaths in that year. Army History Department, *History of*

During this period, the Truman administration discussed South Korea's strategic importance. Indeed, US officials completed a Korea policy review in 1948 and the resulting document, the National Security Council (NSC)-8, outlined the significance of the US position in Korea, not only in terms of preventing Soviet expansion in Asia, but also because any US withdrawal would send a negative message to its allies regarding US credibility. A sudden withdrawal, in particular, could undermine US prestige while also hindering the role of the UN in observing the Korean elections.[61] However, there were also calls for an end to the US presence in Korea. The majority of Americans and most members of Congress desired a reduction in the size of the US military and the defense budget.[62] Even the Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed large-scale US engagement in South Korea, stating that "the U.S. has little strategic interest in maintaining its present troops and bases in Korea."[63] Moreover, it was suggested that the retention of US forces "would serve rather to perpetuate the additional risk that U.S. occupation forces remaining in Korea might be either destroyed or obliged to abandon Korea in the event of a major hostile attack, with serious damage to U.S. prestige in either case."[64] In other words, despite not being considered a priority with regard to US strategic interests, if the decision was made to maintain American troops in Korea, the US would have to accept the risk that those troops could become isolated in the event of a conflict with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, if the US was forced to withdraw its troops in the event of such a conflict, doing so would give the impression of abandoning Korea and so further damage the country's reputation.

As a result, Washington pulled its forces out of Korea in 1949. As a sign of its commitment to South Korean security, however, the US provided a large package of economic and military aid to help rebuild Korea into a stable country capable of resisting communism on its own.[65] Yet, the US only supplied the South Korean military with defensive weapons, denying a request for combat aircraft due to concerns that Rhee might launch an offensive against the North.[66] In addition, while Rhee lobbied for an official security guarantee, Washington was reluctant to agree. As noted in NSC 8/2, US officials believed that they had made an adequate commitment to defend South Korea.[67] Unfortunately, it did not take long for them to be left surprised and alarmed when North Korea launched an attack on the South.

Counterinsurgency Operations, Vol. 1 [대침투작전사 1 권] (Gyeryong: Republic of Korea Army Headquarters, 2018).

[61] "Note by the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Souers) to President Truman, April 2, 1948," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1948, the Far East and Australasia, Volume VI (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1974), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v06/d776.

[62] Heo and Roehrig, *The Evolution of the South Korea–US Alliance*, 58.

[63] "Report by the National Security Council to the President, March 22, 1949," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1949, the Far East and Australasia, Volume VII, Part 2 (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1976), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v07p2/d209.

[64] "Report by the National Security Council to the President, March 22, 1949."

[65] According to the US Agency for International Development, the US aid provided to South Korea amounted to $142 million in 1949 and $103 million in 1950, excluding war aid. See "Country Summary," ForeignAssistance.gov, last modified January 20, 2023, https://www.foreignassistance.gov/data.

[66] Matray, *The Reluctant Crusade*, 173.

[67] "Position of the United States With Respect to Korea (NSC 8/2), March 22, 1949," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1949, The Far East and Australasia, Volume VII, Part 2 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1976), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v07p2.

Korean War 1950–1953

On June 25, 1950, after a year of US troop withdrawals, North Korea launched a surprise attack across the 38th parallel. The invasion catapulted the Korean Peninsula to Washington's highest policy priority, as US policymakers were convinced that Moscow was behind the attack, meaning that the peninsula had become the new frontline of the Cold War. The US State Department compiled an intelligence assessment at the outset of the war, which stated that "The North Korean Government is completely under Kremlin control and there is no possibility that the North Koreans acted without prior instruction from Moscow. The move against South Korea must therefore be considered a Soviet move."[68]

This perception was connected to NSC-68, a top-secret report by Paul Nitze and his study group that examined US security policy and the postwar world order. It recommended a substantial increase in defense spending to build up the US military and its weaponry in order to contain anticipated Soviet expansion. The document foresaw a confrontation with the Soviet Union because it was driven "to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world."[69] The Korean War began just a few months after NSC-68's completion, with North Korea's invasion of South Korea in June 1950. The war provided a real-world test of the assumptions and recommendations in NSC-68, demonstrating the potential for communist aggression and validating the call for a more robust US defense posture to counter such threats.

The US responded relatively quickly to the North Korean invasion. The UN Security Council passed Resolution 82, which condemned the "armed attack on the Republic of Korea by forces from North Korea" and called for the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of North Korean forces back to the 38th parallel.[70] In response to Pyongyang's refusal to comply with Resolution 82, the Security Council adopted Resolution 84, which requested that member states aid in repelling the invasion.[71] To carry out this measure, the United Nations Command (UNC) was established, with the US being given the authority to command it. Eventually, sixteen countries joined the UNC by sending combat forces, medical units, and financial support to Korea, among other forms of military assistance.[72]

The early months of the war proved to be catastrophic for the US/UN and South Korean forces. By August 1950, North Korean forces had advanced south and encircled the Pusan Perimeter. This desperate situation shifted when General Douglas MacArthur led an amphibious operation on the west coast of Inchon to flank the North Korean forces there. After the North Korean forces collapsed in October, US/UN and South Korean forces reached the 38th parallel. They had

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[68] "Intelligence Estimate Prepared by the Estimates Group Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State, June 25, 1950," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1950, Korea, Volume VII (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1976), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v07/d82.

[69] "A Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary (Lay), January 25, 1950," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1950, National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy, Volume I (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1977), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v01/d85.

[70] "Resolution 82 (1950)," UN Security Council, 1950, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/112025?ln=en.

[71] It is important to note that the Soviet Union, a veto-wielding power, was absent from the Security Council meeting held on July 7, 1950, when the resolution was passed.

[72] Terence Roehrig, "Coming to South Korea's Aid: The Contributions of the UNC Coalition," *International Journal of Korean Studies* 15, no. 1 (2011): 63-97.

to choose between maintaining the status quo at the 38th parallel or seizing the opportunity to defeat communism in Korea and unite the Korean Peninsula. Seoul and Washington chose to continue the advance north and came near to achieving victory. However, before that could happen, China intervened. In October 1950, a Chinese "volunteer" army advanced into the North Korean region, drove the US/UN and South Korean forces back down the peninsula, and recaptured the ground they had taken.

Figure 3-1. Map of the Korean War in 1950[73]

[73] "Korean War, June–August 1950," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed February 16, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/event/Korean-War.

By July 1951, the war had reached a stalemate. Negotiations to end the conflict began between North Korea, China, and the UNC. Rhee became increasingly concerned about the future of US–South Korean relations and Washington's commitment to South Korean security as the negotiations proceeded. In particular, Rhee feared that any ceasefire agreement would entail the withdrawal of US troops from Korea, which would ultimately result in a repeat of June 1950. He believed that a mutual defense treaty was the only way to guarantee a continued US commitment and defend his nation against communist expansion. On March 21, 1952, Rhee sent Truman a letter in which he argued that a mutual security pact between Washington and Seoul, as well as the expansion of the South Korean army, were crucial to both persuading the Korean people to agree with the ceasefire and deterring potential communist attacks.[74] However, Washington was hesitant to accept Rhee's idea due to his extreme hostility and the risk of entrapment.[75]

For Rhee, given the power disparity between South Korea and the US, as well as South Korea's incapability to contribute significantly to the US–South Korea alliance, achieving his objective appeared difficult. Rhee recognized that one of his primary sources of leverage was his political ability to obstruct the ceasefire negotiations. By using this leverage, he sought to secure greater concessions from Washington, including a formal security guarantee. His most provocative attempt in this regard was the decision to unilaterally release 27,000 "non-patriate" prisoners of war held in the South. As the repatriation of prisoners was a major issue during the ceasefire negotiations, Rhee's extraordinary act undermined US efforts to secure an armistice.[76] Washington was concerned about Rhee's "open opposition to the efforts which are being made by the Unified Command to bring the hostilities in Korea to an honorable and satisfactory conclusion."[77]

Rhee thought that taking such bold steps could potentially recapture Washington's attention and increase the chances of forming a formal alliance with the US. However, the most decisive reason for the US in establishing a defense pact with South Korea was the importance of the country's defense to the strategic interests of the US. Had the US maintained solely minimal strategic interests in the Korean Peninsula, it is likely that they would have withdrawn their troops again, as they did in 1949, regardless of the actions taken by Rhee.

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[74] "The President of the Republic of Korea (Rhee) to President Truman, March 21, 1952," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1952–1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part I (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1984), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p1/d69.

[75] To deal with Rhee's anti-communist hostility, Washington initially considered the overthrow of Rhee to be a viable option, which gave rise to Operation Everready. This plan was devised in 1952 in preparation for the possibility that Rhee would take unilateral action, such as withdrawing Korean forces from US/UN operational control. In such circumstances, Operation Everready required the securing of key logistical and communication installations, the cessation of the provision of all supplies and assistance to Korean forces, the arrest of Rhee, and the declaration of martial law in the name of the UN command. See "Paper Submitted by the Commanding General of the United States Eighth Army (Taylor), May 4, 1953," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1952–1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part I (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1984), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p1/d492.

[76] Cha, "Informal Empire," 228.

[77] "President Truman to the President of the Republic of Korea (Rhee), March 4, 1952" in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1952–1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part I (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1984), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p1/pg_74.

Reassessment of US Strategic Interests in Korea

It is important to note that at the outset of the Korean War, Washington reassessed the strategic importance of South Korea. After the war, US leaders believed that South Korea remained crucial in the fight against communist expansion, which rendered the country a significant US interest. This strategic importance on the part of South Korea from a Western perspective was clearly outlined in a Canadian strategic document from July 1950. It assessed South Korea's political and military significance in terms of the legitimacy of the UN, the reliability of the US commitment to its newly independent allies, and Japan's ability to defend itself.

> The political importance of South Korea stems primarily from the sponsorship of its existence as an independent state by the United Nations. Aggression against South Korea is by direct implication aggression against the United Nations. Military intervention in support of the United Nations is important to Southeast Asia as an indication of the sincerity of the promises of the West to go to the aid of the newly independent states of Southeast Asia. This is particularly important with respect to United States influence in the Far East for the United States was the most directly concerned of any of the Western Powers in the giving of independence to South Korea. The importance of western moral commitments and of the necessity to stand firmly against the spread of communism cannot be over-emphasized.[78]

In addition, the strategic document notes that if an enemy were to assume control of South Korea, that enemy would have "excellent staging points and concentration areas for airborne and amphibious operations against Japan."[79] At the same time, the possession of South Korea by Western forces would allow its air and guided missile forces to cover Chinese targets. To prevent the enemy from using South Korea as an operational base against Asian allies and allow the allied forces to use it as a forward base to deter the communist threat, it was vital for Western forces to control South Korea.[80]

Officials in Washington were convinced that they had done a poor job of defending US strategic interests in South Korea. Most importantly, they had failed to effectively signal the US willingness to fight for South Korea to its enemies. For example, in September 1953, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles noted, "The Korean war … should finally have taught us that, if we can foresee aggression which will cause us to fight, we should let this be known, so that the potential aggressor will take this into his calculation."[81] For Dulles and others, a repetition of the failure to deter the communist threat on the Korean Peninsula would also endanger the US mainland and its vital interests. Later, President Eisenhower stated the following:

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[78] "The Strategic Importance of South Korea," Chiefs of Staff Committee, Joint Intelligence Committee, August 8, 1950, 2, https://declassified.library.utoronto.ca/exhibits/show/canadian-perspectives-on-korea/korea-vol1/strategic---diplomatic-conside/cdkw00091---the-strategic-impo.
[79] "The Strategic Importance of South Korea," 7.
[80] Meanwhile, the document indicates that "economically South Korea is of slight direct value to the Western powers." See "The Strategic Importance of South Korea," 9.
[81] John Foster Dulles, "Korea Problems," *The Department of State Bulletin* 29, no. 742 (September 14, 1953), 339, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=msu.31293008121331&view=1up&seq=339&q1=isolated.

More closely than ever before, American freedom is interlocked with the freedom of other people. In the unity of the free world lies our best chance to reduce *the Communist threat* without war. … In the Far East, we retain our vital interest in Korea. We have negotiated with the Republic of Korea a mutual security pact, which develops our security system for the Pacific … We are prepared to meet any renewal of armed aggression in Korea [emphasis added].[82]

In South Korea, the communist threat primarily involved the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea. However, these states were not perceived to be equally threatening, and South Korea's threat perceptions of the three changed over time. At the outset of the Korean War, the key threat was perceived to be North Korean aggression backed by Soviet military aid. After China intervened in October 1950, the communist threat morphed into a coalition of Chinese and North Korean forces. After the war, China left more than a million troops stationed in North Korea, and by January 1, 1958, that number had only decreased to 291,000.[83] Thus, the threat of Sino–North Korean combined attacks remained. For this reason, throughout the 1950s, the US and South Korea aimed to deter combined attacks by North Korean and Chinese forces. Yet, in the 1960s, the threat assessment shifted from the potential for Sino–North Korean attacks to North Korea's independent aggression, which was not prompted by Moscow or Beijing.[84] In particular, as Chinese forces withdrew from North Korea in 1958, officials in Washington estimated that China would not support North Korea's military actions against South Korea so long as US forces were stationed in South Korea.[85] Still, they assessed that China might intervene to preserve the status quo if North Korea's collapse appeared imminent.[86, 87]

In short, deterring communist aggression and preventing the invasion of South Korea again became the rationale for Washington's attempt to establish a formal alliance with South Korea.

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[82] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," The American Presidency Project, January 7, 1954, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/annual-message-the-congress-the-state-the-union-13.

[83] Central Intelligence Agency, "Peiping's Proposal on Troop Withdrawals in Korea," Current Intelligence Weekly Summary, February 13, 1958, 6-7, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79-00927A001600080001-8.pdf.

[84] "Special National Intelligence Estimate: North Korean Intentions and Capabilities With Respect to South Korea, September 21, 1967," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d130.

[85] "Memorandum for the Record, May 4, 1962," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1961–1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1996), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v22/d259.

[86] "Letter From Secretary of Defense McNamara to the Administrator of the Agency for International Development (Hamilton), April 27, 1962," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1961–1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1996), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v22/d258.

[87] It should be noted that some military officials had a more alarmist outlook in terms of the likelihood of communist combined attacks on South Korea. For example, "Strategic Appraisal of US Position in Korea 1962-1970," Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara, April 10, 1962, Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files, https://1997-2001.state.gov/about_state/history/frusXXII/241to270.html.

As Dulles emphasized, the treaty would provide a credible commitment that should "prevent any recurrence of the enemy miscalculation of 1950 which brought about the Korean war."[88]

Establishment of the US–South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty

The key agreements and understandings that comprised the US alliance with South Korea were reached during Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson's sixteen-day visit to Seoul in June–July 1953. A defense treaty was deemed necessary because both parties sought to display a united front against the communist threat posed by the Soviet Union and China during the Cold War. For South Korea, the treaty provided a much-needed sense of national security and offered both military and economic aid from the US. In addition, the South Koreans sought a promise from Washington to expel Chinese forces from the Korean Peninsula and hold a political conference to discuss unification in the future.

For the US, there were three main objectives when signing the treaty. First, the US sought to deter communist aggression, prevent attacks against Korea, and protect Japan. Second, it aimed to establish forward bases in the Asia-Pacific region. Third, the US desired to constrain the activities of South Korean President Syngman Rhee, who sought to maneuver the US into retaking the Korean Peninsula. In Robertson's own words, "The essential point is that President Rhee cannot dictate the global policy of the United States or the basic decision of the UN."[89] In a nutshell, both states sought to address their concerns and interests through formulating a defense treaty while also ensuring their mutual security during the Cold War.

As a result of negotiations, the two states signed the US–South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty on October 1, 1953, which created the alliance.[90] The treaty requests the US and South Korea to consult whenever either of them is threatened by an external armed attack, to maintain and develop appropriate means to deter an armed attack, and to adopt suitable measures to implement their treaty commitments (Article II). The treaty also grants the US the right to deploy military forces in and around South Korean territory (Article IV). Moreover, a collective security clause is contained in Article III of the treaty, which states:

> Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the Parties in territories now under their respective administrative control, or hereafter recognized by one of the Parties as lawfully brought under the administrative control of the other, would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its *constitutional processes* [emphasis added].

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[88] Dulles, "Korea Problems," 340.

[89] "Memorandum of Discussion of a Meeting Held at Tokyo on the Korean Situation, June 24-25, 1953," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1952–1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part 2 (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1984), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p2/d634.

[90] For the full text of the treaty, see "Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea," October 1, 1953, https://www.usfk.mil/Portals/105/Documents/SOFA/H_Mutual%20Defense%20Treaty_1953.pdf.

Later, during the ratification process, the US Senate required that the treaty include the following understanding:

> It is the understanding of the United States that neither party is obligated, under Article III of the above Treaty, to come to the aid of the other except in case of an external armed attack against such party; nor shall anything in the present Treaty be construed as requiring the United States to give assistance to Korea except in the event of an armed attack against territory which has been recognized by the United States as lawfully brought under the administrative control of the Republic of Korea.

Despite having successfully negotiated a security guarantee with Washington, President Rhee was concerned about Article III including a "constitutional processes" clause as a condition for US engagement. This clause was central to the treaty and represented a much weaker commitment than that found within the North Atlantic Treaty, which states in Article V that "an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all."[91]

Indeed, Rhee was not satisfied with the clause. During negotiations, a draft of the treaty proposed by the Korean government included a clause similar to that implemented by NATO. In Article V, the draft stated, "The parties agree that an armed attack against one shall be considered an attack against the other."[92] A few days later, in a letter to Dulles, Rhee again asked that prior to the conclusion of the treaty, "in [the] proposed mutual security pact, may we count upon inclusion of a provision for immediate and automatic military support in case ROK should be attacked by an external enemy? As you know, a pact that is sufficient for a nation not in our position would not be adequate to our needs."[93] Decision-makers of Washington acknowledged Rhee's concern. Moreover, Dulles responded and assured Rhee in a letter that "If in violation of the armistice the Republic of Korea is subjected to unprovoked attack you may of course count upon our immediate and automatic military reaction. Such an attack would not only be an attack upon the Republic of Korea but an attack upon the United Nations Command and US forces within that Command."[94] Yet, despite this reassurance, the treaty did not include a clause mandating immediate and automatic military engagement.

Two principal considerations lead to Washington's reluctance to provide the NATO-like security commitment that Rhee desired.[95] First, the US feared that a security guarantee mandating

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[91] For the full text of the treaty, see "The North Atlantic Treaty," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, April 4, 1949, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm.

[92] "Republic of Korea Draft of Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea, July 9, 1953," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1952–1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part 2 (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1984), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p2/d682.

[93] "The President of the Republic of Korea (Rhee) to the Secretary of State, July 24, 1953," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1952–1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part 2 (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1984), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p2/d713.

[94] "The Secretary of State to the President of the Republic of Korea (Rhee), July 24, 1953," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1952–1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part 2 (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1984), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p2/d715.

[95] Terence Roehrig, *From Deterrence to Engagement: The US Defense Commitment to South Korea* (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 168-169.

immediate and automatic military action might encourage Rhee to restart hostilities due to the belief that the US was obliged to assist him with such action. Washington's concern in this regard was understandable. Rhee had already attempted to prevent the armistice by releasing 27,000 non-repatriate prisoners of war and stated that the war should have continued until the Korean Peninsula was reunited under his leadership.[96] The US designed "Operation Everready" as a contingency plan for the removal of Rhee from power due to fear of what he may do and the possibility of the US being dragged into an unwanted conflict.[97]

Second, in the congressional debate concerning ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty, the clause providing an iron-clad assurance of immediate US intervention in NATO security raised serious constitutional concerns regarding the congressional authority to declare war. In particular, the clause implied that an attack on Europe would be treated as an attack on the mainland US. This also implied that the President had the power to order an immediate military response to repel the enemy, even without congressional authorization. To avoid such disputes, Dulles decided to replace the phrase "attack on one" with "constitutional processes" in the alliance treaty. During the US–South Korea mutual defense treaty hearing, Dulles explained that this phrase was "adequate for our purpose" and would "avoid raising a fresh constitutional debate."[98] Consequently, this phrase was used in the treaties between the US and South Korea, the Philippines, Japan, and Australia/New Zealand. As a result, it was not an indication of a lack of commitment, as Rhee feared; rather, it was a constitutional accommodation between the President and Congress regarding the power to declare war.

US Commitment to South Korea

Following the signing of the US–South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty, the alliance was primarily supported by the US unilateral commitment until the 1970s. This commitment consisted of three key components: 1) the economic and military assistance provided by the US, 2) the presence of US conventional forces in Korea, and 3) the nuclear umbrella provided by US nuclear weapons. Each of these components will be discussed briefly below.

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[96] Rhee did not give up on the desire for forceful reunification even after the war. Indeed, Rhee argued in a speech to the United States Congress on July 28, 1954, that the reunification of Korea would be achieved through a joint attack by the US, Taiwan, and South Korea against North Korea. This prompted President Eisenhower to remark to his press secretary James C. Hagerty that "I feel sorry for the old man. He wants to get his country unified, but we cannot permit him to start a war to do it. The consequences would be too awful. But he is a stubborn old fellow, and I don't know whether we'll be able to hold him in line indefinitely." See "Hagerty Diary, July 27, 1954," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1952–1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part 2 (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1984), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p2/d923.

[97] "The Commander in Chief, United Nations Command (Clark) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 8, 1953," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1952–1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part 2 (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1984), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p2/d582; "Memorandum by the Director of the Executive Secretariat (Scott) to the Secretary of State, October 28, 1953," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1952–1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part 2 (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1984), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p2/d781.

[98] "Mutual Defense Treaty Hearing" (1954), 5, quoted in Roehrig, *From Deterrence to Engagement*, 168.

US Economic and Military Assistance to South Korea

During the 1950s, the Soviet Union increased its economic aid to Third World nations. Through aiding in the modernization of the Third World, the Soviet Union aimed to demonstrate the superiority of its system over that of the US.[99] If the Soviet model of modernization and, subsequently, a peaceful transition to socialism were successful in the Third World with Soviet assistance, it would be difficult to rule out the possibility of the Third World deviating from the postwar world order envisioned by the US.[100] Thus, to contain communist expansion, Washington provided military and economic aid to strategically significant states.

In particular, South Korea was considered to have strategic importance due to its location as a Cold War outpost and its symbolic meaning as a nation established with a UN role. However, after the Korean War ended, South Korea's GDP was $1.35 billion, while its per capita GDP was only $65.70.[101] By the early 1960s, it had shown little progress. In 1962, South Korea's per capita GDP rose to $106.10, although its per capita GDP remained lower than that of other Asian countries, such as the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka.[102]

On July 23, 1953, at the NSC meeting, President Eisenhower emphasized the importance of military and economic aid to Korea. The memorandum of the NSC discussion states that "The president said he would like to use any money actually saved in Defense expenditures as the result of an armistice, to expand economic assistance to Korea. He remarked that all the world would be watching Korea after the armistice, so we should set a purposeful objective for ourselves, quit dallying, and go forward rapidly."[103] Over the next twenty-three years, the US poured over $5.75 billion in economic aid and $6.85 billion in military aid into South Korea (see Table 3-1).[104] According to Terence Roehrig, prior to 1961, US aid to South Korea accounted for 27 percent of all US assistance provided to East Asia and the Pacific during the same period.[105] The significance of the US aid to South Korea was also substantial. In 1957 and 1958, for example, South Korea imported $450 million and $316 million, respectively, while exporting only $76 million and $95 million.[106] This suggests that US aid supplemented the trade deficit.

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[99] Frederick Charles Barghoorn, *Soviet Foreign Propaganda* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), Ch. 6; Gu Guan-Fu, "Soviet Aid to the Third World an Analysis of Its Strategy," *Soviet Studies* 35, no. 1 (1983): 71-89.

[100] See Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (London: Hachette UK, 2017), Ch. 13; John L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 223-225.

[101] "Key Indicators (Annual Indicators)," Statistics Korea, accessed December 10, 2022, https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=301&tblId=DT_200Y001&mode=tab.

[102] "GDP Per Capita (Current US$)," World Bank Data, accessed December 10, 2022, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD.

[103] "Memorandum of Discussion at the 156th Meeting of the National Security Council Thursday, July 23, 1953," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1952–1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part 2 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1984), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p2.

[104] Edward S. Mason, Mahn Je Kim, Dwight Heald Perkins, Kwang Suk Kim, and David C. Cole, *The Economic and Social Modernization of the Republic of Korea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 182.

[105] Roehrig, *From Deterrence to Engagement*, 168.

[106] "Key Indicators (Annual Indicators)."

Thus, when the US reduced its economic aid between 1958 and 1961, South Korea endured a significant economic downturn.[107]

Table 3-1. Summary of Economic and Military Assistance from the US to South Korea
($ Million for US Fiscal Years)

	1946–1952	1953–1961	1962–1969	1970–1976	Total
Economic assistance	666.8	2,579.2	1,658.2	963.6	5,745.4
Military assistance	12.3	1,560.7	2,501.3	2,797.4	6,847.3
Total	679.1	4,139.9	4,159.5	3,761.0	12,592.7

Source: Edward S. Mason, Mahn Je Kim, Dwight Heald Perkins, Kwang Suk Kim, and David C. Cole, *The Economic and Social Modernization of the Republic of Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 182.
Note: These figures do not include the value of the massive amounts of military equipment supplied to South Korea during the Korean War.

The primary objective of the US in providing assistance was to rebuild South Korea and strengthen its defense capabilities. After the Korean War, the South Korean military was expanded to maintain 20 divisions and 600,000 soldiers. This massive military build-up was almost entirely supported by military aid from the US to South Korea.[108] In addition, the expansion of political, economic, and military ties with Seoul represented a significant signal of Washington's commitment to South Korean security. Such government aid and private investment increased the stakes for the US in defending Korea, making it more challenging for the US to abandon its ally. Thus, the US assistance demonstrated the depth of the US commitment to containing the communist threat. Furthermore, as South Korea's economic and military capabilities increased as a result of the assistance, the burden on the US extended deterrence would decrease, as South Korea would be able to defend itself in the event of an attack by North Korea.[109]

US Conventional Force Deployment

Thomas Schelling emphasizes that "saying so, unfortunately, does not make it true; and if it is true, saying so does not always make it believed. We evidently do not want war and would only fight if we had to. The problem is to demonstrate that we would have to."[110] According to Schelling, successful deterrence requires a commitment that includes a guaranteed response, leaving the decision to go to war in the hands of the enemy. The reassurance contained within the US–South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty and the magnitude of the US aid represent crucial hand-

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[107] For example, between 1953 and 1957, South Korea's GDP grew at a rate of 5.94%, whereas between 1958 and 1961, it fell by 4.68%.

[108] For this reason, the Kennedy administration considered reducing the size of the Korean army in an effort to reduce the balance of payments deficit.

[109] Roehrig, *From Deterrence to Engagement*, 175.

[110] Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 35.

tying signals intended to deter communist aggression. However, in a crisis, such a promise can be easily broken. When it becomes clear that there will be significant costs associated with fulfilling the commitment, an alliance may quickly disintegrate. The most important factor in times of war is the military capabilities that can be used in actual fighting—that is, the US and South Korean military capabilities in Korea. This is the most tangible manifestation of the US defense commitment.

Following the armistice, the US pulled out a portion of its forces that had been bolstered during the war. Beginning with the withdrawal of the 45th Division in March 1954, seven army divisions were withdrawn from Korea. The US decided to leave approximately 70,000 troops, including the 1st Cavalry Division and the 7th Division, on the Korean Peninsula, rendering it the third largest US overseas deployment. These two US divisions were deployed in the most important locations with regard to the defense of Seoul. One of the divisions was based near the demilitarized zone (DMZ), which included Panmunjom, to defend the frontline and serve as a "trip-wire" for automatic US intervention in the event of war. The other division was positioned in the Cheorwon-to-Seoul corridor, which was equally vital for the defense of Seoul against a North Korean invasion.

Table 3-2. Withdrawal of US Forces from Korea during 1954–1955

	Deployment	Withdrawal		Deployment	Withdrawal
45th Division	December 1, 1952	March 14, 1954	3rd Division	September 22, 1950	October 29, 1954
40th Division	January 11, 1952	June 2, 1954	24th Division	July 3, 1953	November 20, 1954
25th Division	July 10, 1950	September 2, 1954	1st Marine Division	September 15, 1950	March, 1955
2nd Division	July 31, 1950	September 21, 1954			

Source: Institute for Military History, *ROK-US Military Relations 1871-2002 [한미 군사 관계사 1871-2002]* (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, 2002), 675.

The US military presence in South Korea was a result of the Cold War forward-defense strategy adopted by the US to contain communist expansion as well as the lesson learned in 1950 that the hasty withdrawal of US troops in 1949 led to the attack by North Korea the following year. As a consequence of the withdrawal of seven US army divisions between 1954 and 1955, it was necessary to bolster the South Korean military in order to maintain the level of deterrence. Thus, Washington and Seoul discussed this matter during Rhee's visit to the US from July 25 to July 31, 1954. Due to Rhee's continued insistence on the forceful unification of Korea up to that point, the US was concerned that if South Korea's military was strengthened, Rhee would use South Korea's military power to attack North Korea first. Consequently, officials in Washington wanted the South Korean military to be under the operational control of the UNC. Rhee was unsatisfied, but he agreed to transfer operational control to the UNC on the condition that the US provide South Korea with substantial economic and military aid.

Based on the conferences held between Eisenhower and Rhee, the US and South Korea signed "the Agreed Minute" on November 17, 1954.[111] This agreement stipulates US aid to South Korea, South Korea's military build-up, and operational control relations. The agreement states that the US will provide $700 million to Korea for state-building purposes. Furthermore, it stipulates that the South Korean military will consist of 20 active divisions, 10 reserve divisions, and 720,000 troops.[112] Given that South Korea's GDP in 1955 was $1,400 million, it received aid from the US equal to 50 percent of its GDP in 1955 alone. In return, South Korea agreed to "retain [its] forces under the operational control of the United Nations Command while that Command has responsibilities for the defense of the Republic of Korea."[113]

US Nuclear Weapons and the Nuclear Umbrella

The third component of the US–South Korea defense alliance was the deployment of US tactical nuclear weapons to the Korean Peninsula and the inclusion of South Korea within the US nuclear umbrella. Washington first deployed nuclear weapons in South Korea in 1958 as a part of the US force modernization. In particular, the Eisenhower administration adopted the New Look policy and implemented a massive retaliation strategy that relied on the relatively low-cost nuclear deterrent as opposed to the further building of costly local defense forces in allied countries throughout the world.[114] Similarly, on the Korean Peninsula, modernization-related efforts were made to convert the US divisions into nuclear-equipped Pentomic divisions in order to compensate for the shortage of US and South Korean troops in comparison to the massive numbers of Chinese and North Korean forces.

The decision to deploy nuclear weapons in South Korea was made following a heated debate during the 326th NSC meeting of the Eisenhower administration. Secretary of State Dulles opposed the move for a number of reasons, despite being the architect of the New Look policy. He was concerned that "In any case, to advertise the existence of [nuclear weapons] such as these would be bound to cause very serious repercussions for the United States throughout Asia … because such were identified with the West and with the hated doctrine of white supremacy, quite apart from the weapons effects themselves."[115] When National Security Advisor Robert Cutler noted that nuclear weapons would allow South Korea to reduce its troop levels, thereby allowing Washington to reduce some of its costs, Dulles offered the counterargument that "he

[111] US Department of State, "U.S. and Korea Announce Initialing of Agreed Minute," *The Department of State Bulletin* 31, no. 805 (November 29, 1954): 810, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=msu.31293008121380&view=1up&seq=332.

[112] See also "Memorandum of Discussion at the 208th Meeting of the National Security Council Thursday, July 29, 1954," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1952–1954, Korea, Volume XV, Part 2 (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1984), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p2/d926.

[113] US Department of State, "U.S. and Korea Announce Initialing of Agreed Minute," 810.

[114] John Foster Dulles, "The Evolution of Foreign Policy (An Address Made before the Council on Foreign Relations on January 12, 1954)," *The Department of State Bulletin* 30, no. 761 (January 25, 1954), https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.319510012284451&view=1up&seq=114&q1=The%20Evolution%20of%20Foreign%20Policy.

[115] "Memorandum of Discussion at the 326th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, June 13, 1957," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1955–1957, Korea, Volume XXII, Part 2 (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1993), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v23p2/d221.

was not even sure that there was a necessary interdependence between the introduction of these modern weapons and the reductions in [South Korean] armed forces."[116] He felt that South Korea should reduce its forces prior to any US nuclear weapons deployment. In short, the US State Department's position was that the political costs associated with nuclear deployment were too high.

By contrast, the US military strongly favored the deployment of its nuclear weapons in South Korea. The primary reason was the military necessity of preventing North Korea engaging in another rapid assault across the DMZ. Arthur Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that without US nuclear weapons, "the Communists could not be stopped before they had overrun the 60,000 U.S. troops. Hence, the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt that [nuclear weapons] should actually be in place in South Korea to protect the security of our own U.S. troops and to prevent them from being overrun in the initial phases of a Communist offensive."[117] Furthermore, Radford considered South Korea's perspective. As Seoul was only 25 miles from the border and had already been taken three times, South Koreans were well aware that it could be overrun again if forces on the frontline were not strengthened. Thus, if the US did not deploy nuclear weapons, South Korea would likely wish to increase its active divisions rather than reduce them.[118]

In the end, Eisenhower decided to deploy US nuclear weapons in South Korea, as the US military suggested. From January 1958 to the mid-1960s, almost all types of tactical nuclear weapons used by the US Army were introduced to the Korean Peninsula. For example, nuclear gravity bombs and mines, nuclear artillery, Sergeant short-range missiles used by army corps, and Davy Crockett nuclear projectiles that infantry battalions could operate were among the tactical nuclear weapons deployed in South Korea. The yield of the nuclear warheads ranged from megatons to kilotons. Table 2-3 presents the types of tactical nuclear weapons that have been introduced onto the Korean Peninsula since 1958, while Table 2-4 details the total number of tactical nuclear warheads as of 1968. The tactical nuclear weapons were primarily introduced between 1958 and 1965, as shown in the tables below, while the number of nuclear warheads began to decline from 1969, when the Nixon administration entered office. Furthermore, since the Nixon administration, no new tactical nuclear weapons have been introduced onto the Korean Peninsula.

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[116] "Memorandum of Discussion at the 326th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, June 13, 1957."
[117] "Memorandum of Discussion at the 326th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, June 13, 1957."
[118] "Memorandum of Discussion at the 326th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, June 13, 1957."

Table 3-3. Types of US Tactical Nuclear Weapons in South Korea

Introduction	Weapon	Withdrawal
1958	280 mm gun	1962
1958	Honest John 8 inch howitzer Nuclear mine Gravity bomb	Unknown
1960	Lacrosse	1963
1961	Nike Hercules	Unknown
1962	Davy Crockett	1968
1963	Sergeant	Unknown
1964	155 mm howitzer	Unknown

Source: Robert S. Norris, William M. Arkin, and William Burr, "Appendix B: Deployments by Country, 1951-1977," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 55, no. 6 (1999): 66-67.

Note: Appendix B comes at the end of the "History of the Custody and Deployment of Nuclear Weapons: July 1945 through September 1977," a study undertaken a generation ago by the Defense Department and released earlier this year following a Freedom of Information Act request by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). See "History of the Custody and Deployment of Nuclear Weapons July 1945 Through September 1977," Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (Atomic Energy), February 1978, https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/19675-national-security-archive-doc-01-office.

Table 3-4. Total Number of Tactical Nuclear Warheads in Korea

Source: Hans M. Kristensen and Robert S. Norris, "A History of US Nuclear Weapons in South Korea," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 73, no. 6 (2017): 350.

Some of the tactical nuclear weapons were assigned to US infantry divisions deployed on the frontlines to repel any North Korean invasion. However, the Kennedy administration's flexible

response strategy prioritized conventional means of both deterrence and defense. As a result, on the Korean Peninsula, the US military adopted a strategy that relied on the use of nuclear weapons only as a last resort in the event of a conventional defense failure. Accordingly, the Pentomic divisions were reorganized into Road divisions in order to emphasize conventional fighting, while the 7th and 1st Cavalry divisions in South Korea were reorganized between 1963 and 1964. China's nuclear test in 1964 increased the need for the US to strengthen its nuclear deterrence on the Korean Peninsula, although its nuclear policy has remained largely unchanged since then.

Chapter 4. Overture

Beginning of the Alliance Cohesion Crisis

Upon assuming office, the Kennedy administration comprehensively reviewed the Eisenhower administration's alliance policy. In particular, the emergence of a revolutionary regime in Cuba brought to the fore the significance of US policy regarding the Americas, prompting the Kennedy administration to increase its involvement in both Latin America and the Caribbean. Yet, the rise in the balance of payments deficit represented a significant constraint on the new administration's alliance policy. The Kennedy administration, consequently, had to weigh up changes in strategic interests, economic burdens, and domestic political pressures when considering withdrawing US troops from Korea, transferring the military assistance program to Seoul, and reducing the size of the South Korean military. Such considerations had a detrimental effect on the alliance's cohesion, as reflected in the erosion of solidarity seen during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. The present chapter will delve into the related process in detail.

New Strategic Focus

From the late 1950s, Washington and Moscow began to compete in terms of the expansion of their political influence in the "Third World."[119] The Soviet Union actively promoted the ideology-driven, Soviet-style economic planning model, which was attractive to Third World countries seeking to achieve rapid economic development. Even US allies independently increased their economic relations with the Soviet Union and resisted US pressure to continue pursuing a unified containment policy. This was perceived as a disconcerting symbol of the decline of Washington's leadership.[120] While the threat of direct military conflict with the Soviet Union had diminished, the Soviet ideological and economic offensive in the periphery posed a significant challenge to the post-World War II order that the US had established. This strategic situation indicated a new phase of competition for the Kennedy administration, which took office in January 1961.

The Kennedy administration took this situation seriously, and its tasks in relation to the Third World soon became its top alliance policy priority.[121] It first reviewed the previous alliance commitments and foreign aid policy, noting that the Eisenhower administration overly prioritized

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[119] During the Cold War, the term "Third World" was coined to describe countries that remained nonaligned with either NATO or the Warsaw Pact. The US, Western European countries, and their allies constituted the "First World," whereas the Soviet Union, China, and their allies constituted the "Second World."

[120] William S. Borden, "Defending Hegemony: American Foreign Economic Policy," in *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 82-83.

[121] Borden, "Defending Hegemony," 80.

the strategy of forming alliances for deterrence and war-fighting purposes without meeting the demands of underdeveloped allies and Third World countries for economic growth. Indeed, in a memorandum to President Kennedy, Walt Rostow raised the following criticism:

> The foreign aid program we have inherited has these characteristics. The bulk of the resources available is either for direct military purposes (about $2 billion), or to assure military base rights, to support military forces, or to avoid short-run political or economic instability or collapse. Of the $2.2 billion sought in the last Eisenhower budget for non-military purposes, less than $500 million was for development purposes. We are in the position of, say, the New Haven Railway, pouring out large sums to keep afloat, but with neither a defined forward objective nor the fresh capital to move towards it. We begin with a program that is almost wholly defensive in character and one which commands neither the resources, the administration, nor the criteria designed to move the underdeveloped countries towards sustained economic growth.[122]

Washington needed "the New Look in foreign assistance," Rostow added, which consisted of "a turn-around from a defensive effort to shore-up weak economies … with enough resources to move forward those nations prepared to mobilize their own resources for development purposes."[123] Achieving sustained economic growth for underdeveloped allies and Third World countries was predicted to eventually contribute to achieving long-term US national security because the real threat to those countries did not come from the outside, but rather from communist-supported internal threats and insurrections amid economic struggles.[124]

Thus, within the Kennedy administration, there was a realization that the non-military instruments of containment had become as important as military approaches. With regard to US allies, Rostow emphasized that "What we can do is shift rapidly out of defense support and special assistance into long-term development lending in places where there appears to be a basis for turn-around (e.g., Taiwan, Korea, Turkey, Greece, the Philippines, and even, perhaps, Iran)." Concerning Third World countries, Rostow promoted the idea of immunizing those countries against the disease of communism. This necessitated guiding Third World countries away from communism through employing US resources to minimize or eliminate the conditions that rendered communism attractive in the first place.[125]

At this time, there was a particular focus on Latin America. In 1959, Fidel Castro overthrew Fulgencio Batista, a pro-American dictator, and turned the Cuban Revolution into an anti-

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[122] "Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to President Kennedy, February 28, 1961," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1961–1963, Volume IX, Foreign Economic Policy (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1995), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v09/d94.

[123] "Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to President Kennedy, February 28, 1961."

[124] "US Military Aid Policy Toward Non-NATO Countries, undated," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1961–1963, Volume IX, Foreign Economic Policy (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1995), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v09/d84.

[125] John L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 222.

American movement. This was viewed as an "international communist conspiracy" directed by the Soviet Union, and it had tremendous geopolitical implications for US national security due to Cuba being located so close to the US mainland.[126] The Kennedy administration feared that the rest of the region was especially vulnerable to radical social revolution supported by Moscow.

These circumstances prompted Washington to embark on an ambitious campaign to underwrite change and development in Latin America, which was termed "the Alliance for Progress." The program was designed to address poverty and political instability as well as to counter the influence of communist governments and movements in the region. Thus, it required the provision of substantial US financial aid to Latin America, in addition to support for democratic reforms and social programs. Soon after his administration took office, President Kennedy outlined a program to transform Latin America throughout the 1960s. As evidence of his good intentions, Kennedy promised to immediately request $500 million from Congress to fund a campaign to overcome illiteracy, hunger, and disease in the region. He quickly secured the $500 million plus an additional $100 million from Congress to assist Chile in recovering after a destructive earthquake.[127] Furthermore, in August 1961, at Punta del Este, a seaside resort in Uruguay, Secretary of Treasury C. Douglas Dillon pledged to support long-range economic development and provide around $20 billion dollars over the next decade.[128] Between 1961 and 1968, the US provided nearly $7 billion in aid to Latin American and Caribbean nations, which was 4.5 times greater than during the previous eight years (see Figure 4-1 below).

Figure 4-1. US Foreign Aid to Latin America/the Caribbean vs. South Korea, 1954–1968
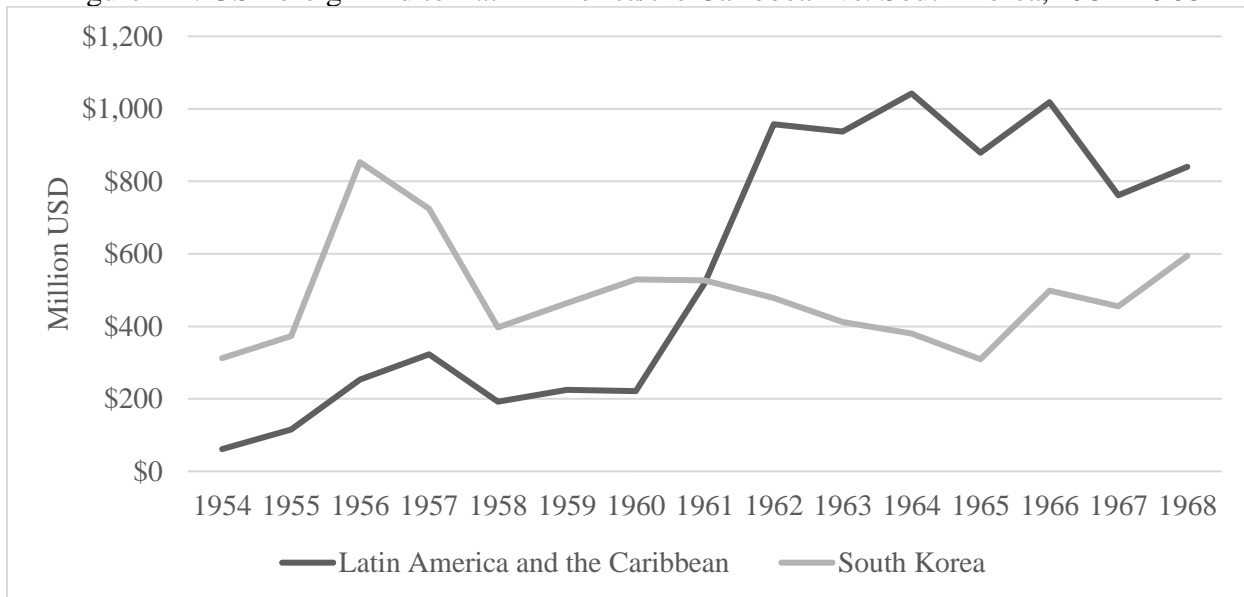
Note: These figures include aid obligations on the part of all the US government agencies to the 33 independent Latin American and Caribbean countries as well as to South Korea.
Source: US Agency for International Development (USAID), "Foreign Assistance Data," ForeignAssistance.gov, accessed February 12, 2023, https://www.foreignassistance.gov/data.

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[126] Stephen G. Rabe, "Controlling Revolutions: Latin America: The Alliance for Progress, and Cold War Anti-Communism," in *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 105-122.
[127] Rabe, "Controlling Revolutions: Latin America," 105.
[128] Rabe, "Controlling Revolutions: Latin America," 106.

Imperial Burden

The new US foreign aid policy, however, faced an immediate challenge: the US balance of payments deficit and its potential negative implications for both the dollar's value and the global economic order.[129]

In 1944, the US spearheaded the creation of the Bretton Woods system, which became the foundation of the global economic order over the subsequent three decades.[130] This system instituted the gold-dollar exchange rate system, whereby the price of gold was fixed at $35 per ounce and all currencies were valued against the dollar.[131] During the 1950s, the Bretton Woods system functioned as intended because the US was able to maintain the dollar's value. In particular, three factors contributed to the dollar's stability during this period. First, following the end of World War II, foreign countries had a high demand for American goods, whereas Americans had a low demand for foreign goods, resulting in a massive trade surplus for the US. Second, the US held the majority of the world's gold reserves, allowing it to stabilize the dollar's value relative to that of gold.[132] Third, after the war, Europe and the rest of the world lacked initial dollar reserves—the so-called "dollar shortage." Foreign countries required dollar reserves to facilitate currency convertibility for the purpose of international trade and cover payment deficits when imports exceeded exports. As the US kept any dollar gains in its currency reserves, it could print more dollars to pay for foreign goods and services without worrying about a balance of payments deficit. Consequently, the rapidly increasing amount of dollars required to support international trade after World War II had little impact on the dollar's value.

However, three significant trends emerged that eventually contributed to the decay of the US-led economic order and the devaluation of the dollar. First, US investors began to invest heavily abroad. Emboldened by the existence of strong monetary reserves and political stability,[133] US capital investors significantly increased their investments in European economies in order to earn greater profits than by investing in the US economy. Second, European countries and Japan developed modern and efficient industries, beginning to catch up or even surpass US industrial production and trade. Third, as these European countries and Japan increased their monetary

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[129] Borden, "Defending Hegemony," 63.

[130] For an excellent reference on the relations between gold, the dollar, and US hegemony, see Francis J. Gavin, *Gold, Dollars, and Power: The Politics of International Monetary Relations, 1958-1971* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[131] After World War II, additional rules were established to prevent protectionist economic conduct, which was blamed for the Great Depression. This implies that the US created an open economic system with as few barriers to trade and capital movement as possible. Two international institutions were also established to support this new US-led international economic order. The first was the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which loans money to countries that have a negative balance of payments because they spend more on foreign goods and services than they make from sales to foreigners. The second key institution was the General Agreements on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), which comprise a set of rules governing tariffs and import quotas (trade barriers).

[132] "The International Movement of Gold and Dollars in 1950," *Federal Reserve Bulletin* 37, no. 3 (March 1951), https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/files/docs/publications/FRB/pages/1950-1954/17720_1950-1954.pdf.

[133] For example, Germany's monetary reserve was less than $200 million in 1950, although it reached $3 billion in 1958. See "Total Reserves Excluding Gold for Germany," FRED Economic Data, St. Louis FED, last modified November 28, 2022, https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/TRESEGDEM052N.

reserves of both dollars and gold, the US gold reserves reduced in value from $22.8 billion in 1950 to $17.8 billion in 1960, a decrease of around 30 percent.[134]

Table 4-1. US Balance of Payments (Annual Averages in Billion USD)

	1951–1956	1957–1961
Current Account	+1.8	+2.1
Merchandise trade	+2.7	+3.6
Earnings on investments	+1.7	+2.4
Military expenditures	−2.2	−2.8
Other services/transfers	−0.4	−1.0
Long-Term Capital Account	−3.2	−4.7
Private long-term capital	−0.9	−2.2
Gov't grants/credits	−2.3	−2.5
Overall Deficit	−1.4	−2.6

Source: William S. Borden, "Defending Hegemony: American Foreign Economic Policy," in *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 60.

These trends resulted in the balance of payments deficit and, subsequently, the gold crisis. As shown in Table 3-1, the US balance of payments deficit underwent two-fold growth from $1.4 billion in the early 1950s to $2.6 billion in the late 1950s. The adequacy of the US gold reserves could not be judged independently of the balance of payments deficit. As Edward Bernstein, who advised the US delegation at the Bretton Woods Conference, explained:

> The willingness of other countries to hold dollars depends upon their confidence that the United States will maintain the present gold value of the dollar and continue the free transfer and convertibility of foreign dollar holdings. Confidence in the dollar depends much more on the strength of the U.S. balance of payments than on the precise magnitude of U.S. gold reserves. Foreign confidence in the dollar would be much greater with a surplus in U.S. payments, even if U.S. gold reserves were only 15 billion dollars, than it is now with over 17 billion of gold reserves, but with the balance of payments in persistent deficit.[135]

As the US balance of payments swung into the negative, people began to lose confidence in both the value of the dollar and the reliability of the Bretton Woods system. For instance, in anticipation of the continuing weakness of the dollar due to the persistent deficit in the overall US balance of payments, speculators purchased gold, which caused the gold price to rise to $40 per ounce on October 20, 1960.[136] In an effort to maintain the international monetary system, the US and seven other Western countries created the London Gold Pool on November 1, 1961. The idea behind the pool was that by having a pool of gold to sell on the market, the eight countries could limit the rise in the market price of gold, which could then be recovered when the price of gold fell. However, without any correction of the structural balance of payment deficit, the pegged price of gold was too low, and the London Gold Pool was dissolved in 1968 due to the run on gold.

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[134] Edward M. Bernstein, "The Adequacy of United States Gold Reserve," *American Economic Review* 51, no. 2 (1961): 440.

[135] Bernstein, "The Adequacy of United States Gold Reserve," 442.

[136] Borden, "Defending Hegemony," 57.

Moreover, US foreign military expenditures further exacerbated the balance of payments crisis. In fact, these expenditures were key to the creation of the post-War World II order. However, as they remained high, they became what David Calleo termed the "imperial burden" of American hegemony that the Kennedy administration inherited. As shown in Table 4-1 above, the US trade surplus was offset by large overseas military and economic aid expenditures, which had grown over time.[137] The massive overseas military expenditures caused the balance of payments deficit, which weakened the dollar and posed a threat to the Bretton Woods system. "We have reached a turning point in our world economic position," President Kennedy emphasized, "one that calls for fresh analysis and determined action."[138] As the US began to increase its foreign military expenditures to support, supply, and arm US forces overseas from the late 1950s onwards, its economic situation deteriorated. The initial overseas military arrangements were designed when the US economy was much stronger than the economies of its allies and aimed "to minimize the economic drain on others and thus [maximize] the dollar drain of the US" so as to bolster the economies of the US allies in a bid to thwart communist expansion.[139] Yet, international economic circumstances had since changed dramatically.

Washington sought to reduce the balance of payments deficit by pressuring its allies to share the defense burden now that its European allies and Japan had robust economies. However, the European allies and Japan did not share Washington's view on the matter. As Robert Roosa noted, "Many countries today object to our balance-of-payments deficit on the grounds that we are financing an aid and military effort which they could not afford, or would not willingly undertake, by foisting on them dollar deposits which they have no need to hold."[140]

All these circumstances resulted in a policy dilemma for the Kennedy administration. First, the administration was eager to resolve the balance of payments problem, particularly after the gold crisis (the increase in the price of gold to $40 per ounce). This was important because the US balance of payments deficit was a significant problem that signaled the impending decline of the US position in the global political and economic order. Second, to reduce the balance of payments deficit, Washington should have decreased its military and foreign aid expenditures. However, as the Kennedy administration intended to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in the US defense strategy, instead emphasizing conventional warfare and a flexible response to Soviet threats, it needed to increase both the military budget and the number of Army divisions.[141] It was also difficult for the US to reduce its economic aid to underdeveloped allies and Third World countries because many of their economies relied on US aid as their primary source of national income. If the US aid decreased, more countries would experience economic turmoil and become vulnerable to internal subversion directed by Moscow. The US could not abandon

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[137] Regarding the concepts, data sources, and estimation procedures associated with the US balance of payments, see US Department of Commerce, *The Balance of Payments of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1990).

[138] "Special Report to the President-Elect," January 18, 1961, quoted in Borden, "Defending Hegemony," 62.

[139] Paul Nitze, "Memorandum on the U.S. Balance of Payments," November 24, 1959, Box 1073, Pre-PP, JFK Library, quoted in Borden, "Defending Hegemony," 81.

[140] Robert Roosa, *The Dollar and World Liquidity* (New York, NY: Random House, 1968), 99, quoted in Borden, "Defending Hegemony," 81.

[141] Eventually, the Kennedy administration handled this problem by calling up reserves, although it did not provide any additional money for increased conventional forces in Europe. See Francis J. Gavin, "The Myth of Flexible Response," *International History Review* 23, no. 4 (2001): 847-875.

them. With limited resources available, the most prudent course of action for Washington was to rethink how it could effectively use those resources to achieve its strategic priorities, which necessitated the reallocation of resources from less urgent to more urgent regions.

Kennedy Administration's Korea Policy

The policy dilemma facing Washington had a substantial impact on US policy toward South Korea. When the Kennedy administration assumed office, South Korea was one of the largest US foreign aid recipients. In addition, the US stationed more than 60,000 US troops in Korea, and the South Korean military relied on US financial and equipment assistance to maintain its 600,000 troops. During the 1950s, South Korea received more economic assistance from the US than all the Latin American and Caribbean countries combined (see Figure 4-1 above). Against this background, on July 8, 1961, the Military Assistance Steering Group was established by Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to review and reshape US assistance policies in relation to six key US aid recipients: South Korea, the Republic of China, Pakistan, Iran, Greece, and Turkey. The aim was to increase the effectiveness of US foreign aid by adjusting the proportion of military to economic assistance and enhancing the related management system.

In a report submitted in December 1961, the Steering Group suggested that US foreign aid should focus on the economic development and nation-building of recipient countries, thereby decreasing the proportion of military aid. With regard to South Korea, if its military were reduced in size, the cost of the associated US military aid could be reduced.[142] In particular, Washington decision-makers viewed South Korea's military as overstrengthened, and they believed that the North Korean threat could be deterred even if its numbers were gradually reduced.[143] Thus, the Steering Group's report suggested reducing the size of the South Korean military from 600,000 to 350,000 and increasing the amount of economic development aid provided in exchange for a reduction in the military aid. Subsequently, during the NSC meeting held on January 18, 1962, the Steering Group report was adopted as NSC Action 2447, which required that a more in-depth, interagency study be undertaken to implement the measures suggested in the Steering Group's report. Regarding US policy toward Korea, NSC Action 2447 required that the interagency study group submit a review report on the desirable size of the South Korean military and US forces in Korea by June 15 of that year.[144]

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[142] "Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs (Kitchen) to Secretary of State Rusk and Secretary of Defense McNamara, December 12, 1961," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1961–1963, Volume IX, Foreign Economic Policy (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1995), https://test.history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v09/d128.

[143] "Memorandum of Conversation Between President Kennedy and Foreign Minister von Brentano, April 13, 1961," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1961–1963, Volume IX, Foreign Economic Policy (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1995), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v09/d104.

[144] "Editorial Note," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1961–1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1996), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v22/d251.

The agencies involved in the study group had differing perspectives on the reduction of South Korean troops. First, from a military standpoint, the US JCS strongly opposed any reduction of South Korean troops. In a report submitted to the Secretary of Defense dated April 11, 1962, the JCS argued that North Korea could launch an attack against South Korea at any time with Chinese support. In particular, China, which was developing nuclear weapons, was expected to soon acquire limited nuclear capabilities, meaning that South Korea should maintain its troop levels in preparation for North Korean and Chinese military buildup and joint attacks. This argument was consistent with the view of Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Lyman Lemnitzer. In February 1961, Lemnitzer emphasized that the salary level of the South Korean military was very low. Thus, he argued that the effect of reducing South Korean troops would not be significant, whereas maintaining Korean troops would be a cost-effective way of maintaining the US defense posture.[145]

By contrast, the State Department and the NSC staff claimed that the reduction of South Korean troops was not only desirable from a cost-savings standpoint, but also plausible from a military perspective. In this regard, Robert Komer, a member of the NSC staff, argued that reducing the number of South Korean troops from 16 to 12 divisions would still leave Korea with sufficient troops to defend against independent attacks by North Korea. Furthermore, it would be inefficient to maintain a massive South Korean force in preparation for highly improbable North Korea–China joint attacks. As Seoul was also eager to promote economic development, it would likely accept a reduction in its force size if Washington committed to investing the resulting savings in economic development.[146]

Additionally, the State Department was proactive in relation to the withdrawal of some US forces from South Korea. In particular, Dean Rusk anticipated that the relocation of a US division from Korea to Okinawa "would result in greater military flexibility and balance-of-payments relief."[147] Deputy Under Secretary of State Alexis Johnson also suggested that "from the standpoint of Communist intentions, one division should be sufficient to serve as a 'plate glass' and thus deter another attack. He presumed that sizeable savings of foreign exchange could be realized by shifting a division to a 'dollar area'; and that these 'savings' would reduce the need for cutting ROK forces."[148]

However, the US JCS continued to oppose the idea of withdrawing a US Army division from Korea. An important reason for this was the belief that the deployment of a US division would "dilute our present deterrent to Communist aggression in Korea to an unacceptable level."[149] In addition, the JCS was concerned about the consequences of the US losing its control and influence over Korea if Seoul became reluctant to maintain US operational control of its military forces. All the same, the JCS gave the cost issue a great deal of consideration. For instance, it

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[145] "Memorandum by Robert H. Johnson of the National Security Council Staff, June 13, 1961," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1961–1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1996), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v22/d227.

[146] "Memorandum by Robert H. Johnson of the National Security Council Staff, June 13, 1961."

[147] "Letter From the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Gilpatric) to Secretary of State Rusk, August 28, 1962," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1961–1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1996), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v22/d274.

[148] "Letter From the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Gilpatric) to Secretary of State Rusk, August 28, 1962."

[149] "Letter From the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Gilpatric) to Secretary of State Rusk, August 28, 1962."

estimated that the proposed redeployment could cost up to $138 million due to the need to acquire land and build a base in Okinawa, while it would also be more expensive to maintain a division in Okinawa. Furthermore, it would be expensive to transport troops from Okinawa during the initial phase of any hostilities on the Korean Peninsula.[150]

The agencies' opinions failed to converge, and consequently, the required report was not submitted by the deadline. One notable observation from the related conversations is that the reduction of South Korean troop numbers and the withdrawal of some US forces from Korea were primarily discussed in terms of the effect of the cost reduction, rather than in relation to a change in the threat perception or a re-evaluation of strategic interests in and around Korea. Those opposed to the reduction of South Korean troops and the withdrawal of US forces highlighted the fact that the effect of cost savings would be limited, whereas the reduction would increase the deterrence gap. By contrast, the proponents argued that sufficient deterrence would be exercised even after the troop reduction, and they noted that the troop reduction would have the effect of both reducing costs and increasing strategic flexibility, which could reduce the balance of payments deficit.

Taylor Paper

At a time when Washington's South Korea policy was stalled due to interagency disagreements, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Maxwell Taylor presented a new military strategy for the Korean Peninsula on September 20, 1962. This followed his visit to and re-examination of US policy toward key Asian countries, including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and South Vietnam.[151] Taylor claimed that it was difficult to achieve all the policy objectives without mutual conflict because reducing the alliance costs with regard to South Korea conflicted with other military/strategic objectives. For instance, Washington sought to achieve a substantial reduction in South Korea's military spending, the Korean government's self-financing of the US military assistance program (MAP), and a restriction on the outflow of US dollars. However, reducing South Korean forces and US military assistance would not only affect North Korea's deterrence, but also impede the modernization of South Korean forces. This would increase South Korea's security reliance on the US, and as a result, "the US force strength in Korea [would be] nailed down for the indefinite future."[152] The Taylor paper argued that the policy objective of reducing costs in relation to Korea could only be achieved by revising the war plan based on new assumptions concerning the Korean Peninsula. Consequently, the paper proposed that the US–South Korea combined forces focus on defending against North Korea's independent attacks, with the US introducing Pershing missiles onto the peninsula. On the basis of these premises, the US might contemplate reducing the number of South Korean troops to 350,000 and withdrawing a US military division to form a new strategic reserve for the Pacific Command.

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[150] "Letter From the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Gilpatric) to Secretary of State Rusk, August 28, 1962."

[151] "Paper Prepared by the President's Military Representative (Taylor), September 20, 1962," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1961–1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1996), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v22/d277.

[152] "Paper Prepared by the President's Military Representative (Taylor), September 20, 1962."

Secretary of Defense McNamara was intrigued by the JCS proposal because the idea of withdrawing US forces from South Korea and converting them into strategic reserves for the Pacific Command was consistent with his idea. In particular, McNamara sought to reduce US military spending abroad by $300 million by the fiscal year (FY) 1964 through reducing the number of US forces stationed in both Korea and Europe.[153] The introduction of new military transport aircraft, such as the C-130, would increase the mobility of US forces in terms of deployment in the event of communist hostility. Thus, he believed that maintaining deterrence would not be an issue even if some US forces were converted into strategic reserves.[154] In June 1963, the Department of Defense, under the direction of Deputy Assistant Secretary William Bundy, began to develop a scenario for a phased reduction in the Korean military as well as a plan to withdraw a division of US Forces from Korea during the FY 1964.[155] However, following the assassination of President Kennedy, the final decision in this regard passed to the Johnson administration.

Johnson Administration

President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas on November 22, 1963, resulting in Vice President Lindon B. Johnson succeeding him. The new Johnson administration largely continued the previous administration's alliance policies and, therefore, continued to examine the issues related to Korea, such as the South Korean force reduction, the withdrawal of US forces from Korea, and the transfer of MAP to the Korean government. Given the economic implications of the cost-saving measures, President Johnson was keen to conclude the matter quickly. As McGeorge Bundy explained, "The President is most anxious that we get some action on this matter which has been hanging fire for so long."[156]

However, the Pentagon and the State Department continued to pursue divergent approaches to the force reduction issue. At a meeting between McNamara and Rusk held on January 21, 1964, McNamara insisted on reducing the number of South Korean troops by 70,000 and the number of US troops by 12,000. This represented an adjustment of the JCS's prior position that the Korean military could be reduced to 350,000 personnel. According to McNamara, such an approach

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[153] In particular, in his message to the US Congress concerning the balance of payments in July 1963, President Kennedy announced a series of actions intended to achieve a projected reduction in the annual rate of the Department of Defense's expenditures abroad to $300 million below the calendar year 1963 level through measures to be put into effect prior to the end of the calendar year 1964. See "Remarks by Secretary McNamara," NATO Ministerial Meeting, December 17, 1963, https://historyinpieces.com/documents/documents/mcnamara-report-nato-1963/.

[154] "Draft Memorandum for the President," June 4, 1963, Box 1, Entry 3059, RG 59, NA, quoted in Sangyoon Ma, "An Unfinished Plan: US Policy Discussions on Withdrawal of US Troops from South Korea During the Early 1960s," *Korea and International Politics* 19, no. 2 (2003): 20-21. Note: The same document can be found in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* records, although it lacks specifics.

[155] "Kitchen to Alexis Johnson," June 21, 1963, Box 1, Entry 3059, RG 59, NA, quoted in Sangyoon Ma, "An Unfinished Plan," 21.

[156] "Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson), December 20, 1963," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1961–1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1996), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v22/d320.

would achieve two policy objectives: the long-needed shift would reduce costs and secure strategic reserves in East Asia. NSC staff member Robert Komer also agreed with the Pentagon's idea, stating that "we're overinsured militarily in Korea at a time when we need strength much more elsewhere. The big danger area is in Southeast Asia not Northeast Asia, and has been ever since the Korean War."[157]

Rusk and the State Department favored a phased approach to the force reduction and withdrawal, fearing that a large-scale reduction in South Korean forces, the withdrawal of US forces, and a reduction in the MAP would undermine the credibility of US commitments to other allies in Asia. Furthermore, the US embassy in Korea noted that the newly established Park government required economic stabilization and sought the settlement of South Korea–Japan relations. In such circumstances, the US embassy emphasized that the force reduction measures would amount to opposition tactics, as the "simultaneous announcement that both [South Korea] and US forces will be reduced would come as severe jolt, with psychological and political repercussions that could jeopardize stability of [the Korean government]." Thus, the embassy recommended that the US avoid announcing a reduction in US forces and requiring a reduction in South Korean forces.[158]

Komer considered that such debates were unnecessary, writing in a memorandum to President Johnson that "It would be a pity to postpone entirely once again."[159] He argued that the matter should be resolved as soon as possible. In response, Johnson issued National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 298 on May 5, 1964.[160] NSAM 298 directed the State Department, the Pentagon, and the US Agency for International Development (AID) to complete a joint study on the issue of the withdrawal of one US division from Korea and the reduction of US military aid to Korea by May 26, 1964.[161] The primary aim of this report was to analyze the likely negative and positive effects of the withdrawal of a US division and the reduction of US military aid to South Korea. In particular, the focus of the analysis of possible negative effects was on the political repercussions for the Korean government and how US intentions would be communicated to allies in Asia (because Washington was concerned about the credibility of US commitments to its allies). With regard to the benefits, the value of a troop reduction in relation to the balance of payments deficit and the flexibility of the US military posture were key considerations. Neither the threat posed by North Korea, the issue of deterrence, nor strategic interests in South Korea drove the related discussions.

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[157] "Memorandum From Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to President Johnson," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1964), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d2.

[158] "Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, January 21, 1964," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d1.

[159] "Memorandum From Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to President Johnson."

[160] "National Security Action Memorandum No. 298, May 5, 1964," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964-1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d9.

[161] Regarding the views of the participating agencies on the issues, see "Draft Memorandum From Secretary of State Rusk to President Johnson, June 8, 1964," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d17.

In the meantime, on June 3, 1964, the Korean government declared martial law following the intensification of protests against the South Korea–Japan talks. This represented a significant political crisis for Park Chung-hee, and the withdrawal of US forces could have placed the Korean government in an even more precarious position. Consequently, the joint study directed by NSAM 298 was suspended. Even Komer, who was active in promoting the withdrawal of US forces from Korea, agreed that it would be wise to delay the withdrawal until after the settlement of South Korea–Japan relations. After martial law was lifted on July 29, 1964, and once the political crisis had passed, the move to reduce US forces and military aid to South Korea resumed. By June 1965, the Johnson administration had decided to reduce the number of US forces stationed in South Korea by 9,000. However, the administration had to suspend its plan to withdraw US forces again when Washington decided to expand US military intervention in Vietnam in May 1965 and so required South Korea's support for the Vietnam War.[162]

Vietnam War and Seoul's Response

The discussion in Washington regarding the withdrawal of US forces from the Korean Peninsula was kept secret. However, certain information was leaked to United Press International (UPI), which reported that the US government was considering withdrawing US forces as part of its plan to restructure its military posture. On October 25, 1963, leading Korean newspapers cited and reported the UPI article.[163] Concerns grew in Seoul over the potential loss of deterrence if US forces were to withdraw from the Korean Peninsula given the existing North Korean threat. In particular, such concerns were driven by memories of the Korean War, which Koreans believed was triggered by the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea in 1949.[164] During a meeting with Secretary of State Rusk on January 31, 1964, President Park expressed these concerns. According to an airgram sent by the US embassy in Seoul, Park "spoke exclusively about the necessity for retaining" US forces at the present level.[165] Unfortunately, what South Korea wanted was very different from Washington's view on the matter. When the commander in chief of the UN command in Korea met Defense Minister Kim Sung-eun, Kim proposed following:

    a. That ROK armed forces not be reduced.
    b. That US forces in Korea not be reduced.
    c. That military aid to Korea be increased.

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[162] Ma, "An Unfinished Plan," 27.

[163] "Partial Withdrawal of US Forces From Korea Discussed [주한미군 일부 철수검토]," *Chosun Ilbo*, October 25, 1963,
https://newslibrary.chosun.com/view/article_view.html?id=1307219631025m10217&set_date=19631025&page_no=2.

[164] "The Success of Airborne Exercise Cannot Justify the Withdrawal of US Forces [미군의 대공수작전 성공은 주한미군감축   이유가   못된다]," *Chosun   Ilbo*,   October   25,   1963, https://newslibrary.chosun.com/view/article_view.html?id=1307219631025m1021&set_date=19631025&page_no=2.

[165] "Airgram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, February 5, 1964," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d3.

d. That the MAP Transfer Program—Korea be suspended for at least two years.

e. That the United States support financially the needed pay increase for the Korean armed forces.[166]

Washington could not accept these proposals, so it responded ambiguously by neither affirming nor denying them.[167] The turning point proved to be South Korea's decision to send military troops to Vietnam, which dramatically improved Seoul's position in terms of negotiating with Washington. After France's withdrawal from Vietnam in 1954, the US provided military and economic support to the Ngo Dinh Diem regime in South Vietnam in an effort to prevent communist expansion in Southeast Asia. However, as a result of the Diem dictatorship, public sentiment in South Vietnam had shifted toward the negative and the political situation had become unstable. Eventually, Diem was killed in a military coup on November 1, 1963, which caused the situation in South Vietnam to deteriorate. As Kennedy's successor, Johnson increased both military and economic aid to help stabilize South Vietnam. At the same time, his administration launched the More Flags campaign in April 1964 to foster international support for South Vietnam. This campaign was important for Washington because "The contribution which additional states will make helps the war effort but also has a beneficial effect on the morale of the South Vietnamese government."[168]

Against this background, from early 1964, Seoul began to seriously consider sending troops to Vietnam in an attempt to reverse the situation with regard to the US force withdrawal. For instance, a document prepared by President Park's office on January 6, 1964, summarized the benefits of sending Korean troops to Vietnam as follows. First, the Korean government anticipated that Washington would welcome Seoul's decision to send troops. Second, South Vietnam's defense could be linked to South Korea's security. Third, sending troops to defend Vietnam from the communist threat would bolster the anti-communist sentiment at home. Fourth, providing troops would strengthen the solidarity of anti-communist countries in Asia. The first and second considerations are particularly noteworthy here.[169] By linking the situation in South Vietnam to South Korea's security issue, Seoul sought to argue that if Washington were to withdraw US forces from Korea in order to strengthen its strategic reserve in Southeast Asia, South Korea's security would be jeopardized, which would eventually result in the worsening of the situation in South Vietnam. Seoul also believed that the South Vietnamese crisis could spread to the South Korean security crisis, meaning that the deployment of South Korean troops to defend South Vietnam should be viewed as a preventative measure. Seoul's calculation in this regard is vividly depicted in the memoirs of Kim Chong-ryom, then Korean ambassador to the US:

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[166] "Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara, August 11, 1964," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d19.

[167] "Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara, August 11, 1964."

[168] "Summary Record of the 532d Meeting of the National Security Council, May 15, 1964," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume I, Vietnam, 1964 (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1992), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v01/d156.

[169] President's Office Document, Report 65, No. 7, January 6, 1964, quoted in Tae-Gyun Park, "U.S. Military Policy Toward South Korea and Responses of the Korean Government in 1950s and 1960s," *International Area Studies* 9, no. 3 (2000): 47.

[During the spring of 1964], Choi Deok-shin, ambassador to Germany, made a trip to Washington and delivered the President's special order to the South Korean embassy there. It was to explain to the US government the significance of South Vietnam's defense and to offer to send Korean troops if the US intervened actively in Vietnam. The following were the reasons why the President suggested sending troops: First, a communist South Vietnam would have a significant impact on the security of Korea. This was due to the Domino Effect—if one country was communized, its neighbors would quickly follow suit. The second objective was to prevent the withdrawal of US forces from Korea. This was President Park's primary concern and motivation for sending troops to Vietnam. At the time, the United States was considering withdrawing its forces. Instead of sending US forces in Korea, the President thought that several Korean divisions could be sent to Vietnam, while the US forces could remain in place.[170]

President Park was active in making the decision to send combat troops to Vietnam. After the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed by the US Congress on August 10, 1964, US Ambassador to Seoul Winthrop Brown met with Park on December 19, 1964 to request the deployment of South Korean troops to Vietnam. According to the memorandum of conversation between Park and Brown, the latter asked for combat support forces such as engineering and construction units, transport pilots, and medical units to be sent.[171] This was because the Vietnam War remained characterized by counterinsurgency operations and guerilla warfare, and Washington had not yet planned to send large numbers of ground combat forces to Vietnam. Park first suggested that South Korea could deploy two combat divisions to Vietnam, suggesting that "more vigorous action by the United States would be helpful in defeating the Viet Cong and in getting the support of wavering neighboring countries."[172] Moreover, Park proposed also sending recently discharged veterans who were willing to go to Vietnam to fight, namely the Freedom Defense Volunteer Corps.[173] "The time had not yet come for introduction of outside combat forces," Brown cautiously stated, although he "promised to pass on the President's views to President Johnson."[174] In March 1965, South Korea sent the Dove Unit, a group of engineering and medical personnel numbering around 2,000, to Vietnam.

In 1965, despite airstrikes on North Vietnam—namely the Operation Rolling Thunder campaign—and deeper US military involvement, the situation in Vietnam deteriorated. As a result, Washington contemplated sending additional US ground combat forces and directly engaging in counterinsurgency operations. Prior to this, the US military's role in South Vietnam was advisory and related to static defense. This policy modification was drafted by the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy, and it is noteworthy that from the outset he considered the participation of military forces from South

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[170] Kim Chong-ryom, *A 30-Year History of Korean Economic Policy [한국 경제정책 30 년사]* (Seoul: JoongAng Ilbosa, 1990), 321-325.
[171] "Memorandum of Conversation, December 19, 1964," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d28.
[172] "Memorandum of Conversation, December 19, 1964."
[173] "Memorandum of Conversation, December 19, 1964."
[174] "Memorandum of Conversation, December 19, 1964."

Korea, Australia, and New Zealand in combat operations alongside the US military.[175] The principals, including the President, Secretary of State, Deputy Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Director of Central Intelligence, met to discuss this draft on April 1–2, 1965. During the meeting, the principals decided to immediately send 20,000 additional military support forces to augment the existing units, in addition to two Marine battalions and one Marine air squadron. The US ground forces were also authorized to "engage in counterinsurgency operations in South Vietnam." Moreover, as per the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the principals tentatively decided to deploy three more divisions—two US divisions and one South Korean division.[176] The decisions made during the meeting were documented in NSAM 328 and issued on April 6. In the memorandum, the President approved the urgent exploration of the possibility of rapid deployment of significant combat elements in participation with the governments of South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand.[177]

President Johnson directly discussed the issue of deploying South Korean combat troops with President Park during Park's visit to Washington for ten days beginning on May 16, 1965. During the summit meeting with Park, Johnson reassured him that the US had no intention of withdrawing its forces and actually planned to extend "all possible aid to Korea."[178] Then, Johnson requested that one Korean division be sent to Vietnam. Park evaded giving an immediate response and stated that "The people in Korea were worried whether they might not invite further activity from North Korea if they weakened the line by sending too many troops to Vietnam."[179] During the second summit, which was held on May 18, Park linked the deployment of South Korean troops to the issue of the US MAP transfer, explaining that South Korea was prepared to join the US in the fight against communism, although the decision to do so was contingent on US support. Johnson responded that South Korea's deployment of combat forces to Vietnam would allow the US Congress to allocate more aid to South Korea, thereby avoiding immediately providing a definitive answer to Park's request.[180]

After the summit, South Korea accelerated the procedures necessary for the deployment of combat forces, including congressional debate and approval. In June 1965, the South Vietnamese government officially requested the deployment of a Korean combat division in a letter sent to South Korean Prime Minister Jeong Il-kwon. On July 1, the Park government held a National Security Council meeting, and during the Cabinet meeting on July 2, decided to deploy a combat

[175] "Memorandum by the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, April 1, 1965," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume II, Vietnam (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1996), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v02/d228.

[176] "Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence McCone to the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, April 1, 1965," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume II, Vietnam (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1996), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v02/d230.

[177] "National Security Action Memorandum No. 328, April 6, 1965," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume II, Vietnam (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1996), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v02/d242.

[178] "Memorandum of Conversation, May 17, 1965," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d48.

[179] "Memorandum of Conversation, May 17, 1965."

[180] "Memorandum of Conversation, May 18, 1965," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d51.

division. In October 1965, one Army division and one Marine brigade were deployed to Vietnam. Moreover, in September 1966, one additional Army division was deployed. In total, South Korea sent around 50,000 troops to Vietnam.[181]

Figure 4-2. Vietnam War Allied Troop Levels by Year

Source: "Vietnam War Allied Troop Levels 1960-73," The American War Library, accessed January 2, 2023, http://www.americanwarlibrary.com/vietnam/vwatl.htm.

US Interests in Korea Rekindled

South Korea's force deployment to Vietnam rekindled US interests in Korea, improved relations between Washington and Seoul, and consequently, strengthened the alliance's cohesion. South Korea's troop deployments resulted in a number of purchasing contracts from the US as well as other economic benefits. Most importantly, South Korea's assistance in Vietnam allayed fears of a decline in the US commitment to South Korean security. For example, Vice President Hubert Humphrey visited South Korea on New Year's Day 1966, and then just 50 days later, on February 22, he visited Seoul once more. During his second visit, Humphrey declared that the US had a "firm commitment to the defense of Korea" and stated "we are allies, we are friends, you should have no question no doubts."[182] He also reaffirmed the US assistance necessary for the deployment of South Korean combat forces. In a letter to President Johnson following his visit to South Korea, Humphrey actively represented Seoul's position: "If there is delay [in the provision of military assistance], then indeed someone should expedite the shipment of the

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[181] Sangyoon Ma, "The Deployment of South Korean Troops to Vietnam and the Role of the National Assembly," *Regional and International Area Studies* 22, no. 2 (2013): 70.

[182] Vice President Hubert Humphrey, "Extemporaneous in Korea," February 23, 1966, Security Agreements Hearings (1970), quoted in Roehrig, *From Deterrence to Engagement*, 132.

necessary equipment and parts."[183] Subsequently, on March 7, 1966, US Ambassador to Korea Winthrop Brown and South Korean Foreign Minister Lee Dong-won signed a memorandum on US cooperation in increasing the deployment of South Korean troops to Vietnam. The so-called "Brown Memorandum" promised US support for South Korea's national security and economic development on the condition that South Korea send additional troops to Vietnam.[184]

Moreover, on May 18, 1966, the US Pacific Commander, Admiral Grant Sharp, visited Seoul to brief President Park on the situation in Vietnam. The fact that the US Pacific Commander, not the USFK Commander, directly briefed President Park in Seoul on the situation of the war, which was not typical, demonstrates that Washington regarded South Korea as an important partner.[185] On July 9, Secretary of State Rusk visited Seoul and signed the 13-year-delayed US–South Korea Administrative Agreement on the status of US forces in Korea.[186] In October 1966, seven countries participating in the Vietnam War met in Manila, the Philippines, at the suggestion of Park,[187] while President Johnson visited Korea on November 1. It was the second visit by a US president to South Korea, coming six years after President Eisenhower's initial trip in June 1960. The South Korean government hosted a grand welcome ceremony, and President Johnson lauded President Park's accomplishments. He stated that "Korea plays an honorable and vital role in the Pacific Community under the President's leadership."[188] In a joint statement regarding the summit, Johnson "expressed the admiration of the American people for Korea's major contribution to the struggle in Viet-nam."[189] The statement also reaffirmed "the readiness and determination of the United States to render prompt and effective assistance to defeat an armed attack against the Republic of Korea."[190]

South Korea's involvement in the Vietnam War had a positive impact on the alliance's cohesion due to demonstrating South Korea's ability to shoulder a greater share of the costs involved in achieving the alliance's goals. By successfully deploying two and a half combat divisions, South Korea showed that its forces were well trained and combat-ready, which helped to enhance deterrence on the Korean Peninsula by impressing North Korea with its military capabilities. In addition, the establishment of a combined command and the joint operations conducted in

[183] "Memorandum From Vice President Humphrey to President Johnson, January 5, 1966," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d68.

[184] "Brown Memorandum," March 4, 1966, National Institute of Korean History, accessed February 14, 2023, http://contents.history.go.kr/front/hm/view.do?treeId=020108&tabId=01&levelId=hm_150_0070.

[185] Seuk-ryule Hong, "Dangerous Honeymoon: ROK-US Relations During Johnson Administration, and the Vietnam War," *Critical History* 88 (2009): 227.

[186] "Korea-U.S. Administrative Agreement Signed," *Chosun Ilbo*, July 10, 1966, https://newslibrary.chosun.com/view/article_view.html?id=1391119660710m1011&set_date=19660710&page_no=1.

[187] "Memorandum of Conversation Between President Johnson and President Pak, October 23, 1966," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d94.

[188] "Greetings from President Johnson," *Chosun Ilbo*, November 1, 1966, https://newslibrary.chosun.com/view/article_view.html?id=1400819661101m10113&set_date=19661101&page_no=1.

[189] "Joint Statement Following Discussions With President Park of Korea, November 2, 1966," The American Presidency Project, UC Santa Barbara, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/joint-statement-following-discussions-with-president-park-korea.

[190] "Joint Statement Following Discussions With President Park of Korea, November 2, 1966."

Vietnam allowed South Korea to integrate its military capabilities with those of the US, thereby further strengthening the alliance cohesion. South Korea's participation in the Vietnam War also sent important signals that the US aid provided over the past two decades to rebuild South Korea's economic and military capabilities had served its purpose. The fact that South Korea was able to deploy more than two combat divisions without weakening its defense preparedness at home was a testament to the success of the aid. This success further reinforced US interests in South Korea's defense. Overall, South Korea's force deployment in Vietnam not only demonstrated its military capabilities, but also strengthened the alliance's cohesion by sharing costs and demonstrating a robust bilateral relationship. It indicated a shift away from the credibility problems that had plagued the US extended deterrence and enhanced deterrence on the Korean Peninsula.

Pueblo Incident and Vance Report

The close relationship between the US and South Korea was, however, seriously challenged by North Korea's provocations. From late 1966 onwards, the intensity and frequency of North Korean provocations increased dramatically (see Figure 4-3). North Korea's provocation culminated in a commando raid on the South Korean presidential residence (or the Blue House) on January 21, 1968.[191] Just two days later, North Korea captured the USS Pueblo, a Navy intelligence ship, in international waters outside North Korean territory.[192] Along with other provocations, these two incidents heightened South Koreans' sense of insecurity.[193]

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[191] This is known as the Blue House Raid or the January 21st Incident. During the raid, North Korean commandos attempted to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung-hee. The raid was part of North Korea's wider strategy for destabilizing the South Korean government. North Korean commandos infiltrated Seoul and entered the grounds of the presidential residence disguised as South Korean soldiers. The commandos breached the outer security perimeter and gained access to the presidential residence, although they were detected by South Korean guards before they could reach President Park. The ensuing gunfight resulted in the deaths of 29 North Korean commandos and 26 South Koreans, including 24 civilians. The raid came as a significant shock to South Korea, which had been enjoying rapid economic and political development under President Park's leadership.

[192] The Pueblo Incident occurred on January 23, 1968, just two days after the Blue House Raid. The USS Pueblo was on a routine surveillance mission off the coast of North Korea when it was intercepted by North Korean naval vessels. Despite the crew's efforts to avoid capture, the Pueblo was attacked, and one crew member was killed in the process. The Pueblo's 82 crew members were imprisoned and accused of espionage. The crew was held captive for 11 months and subjected to physical and psychological torture during that time. Washington responded with diplomatic efforts to secure the crew's release, but Pyongyang demanded that the US issue a formal apology and admit to spying in exchange for their release. Following months of negotiations, the US agreed to issue a statement of regret regarding the incident. The crew members were released and returned to the US on December 23, 1968.

[193] According to the analysis of the US embassy in Seoul, while the timing of the Pueblo seizure was related to the Seoul raid, there were complex reasons why North Korea engaged in both. In this regard, Vietnam played a central role. Kim Il Sung had long advocated for greater communist assistance to North Vietnam, and his latest pronouncement, which called for "more positive actions" to aid Hanoi, was issued on January 18, 1968. At the time, when all aspects of the Vietnam struggle were intensifying, the North Korean leadership might have felt that they could make no greater contribution to the communist agenda than to take bold actions designed to reduce South Korean support for augmented or even continued participation in Vietnam, to take advantage of the current political difficulties and further reduce public confidence in the Park government, and to shake the mutual confidence between Washington and Seoul. Bold actions could also, of course, create a diversion on the Korean Peninsula and both force the US to divert military resources from its Vietnam effort and stimulate additional domestic and overseas

Figure 4-3. Numbers of North Korean Provocations and Deaths, 1960–1979
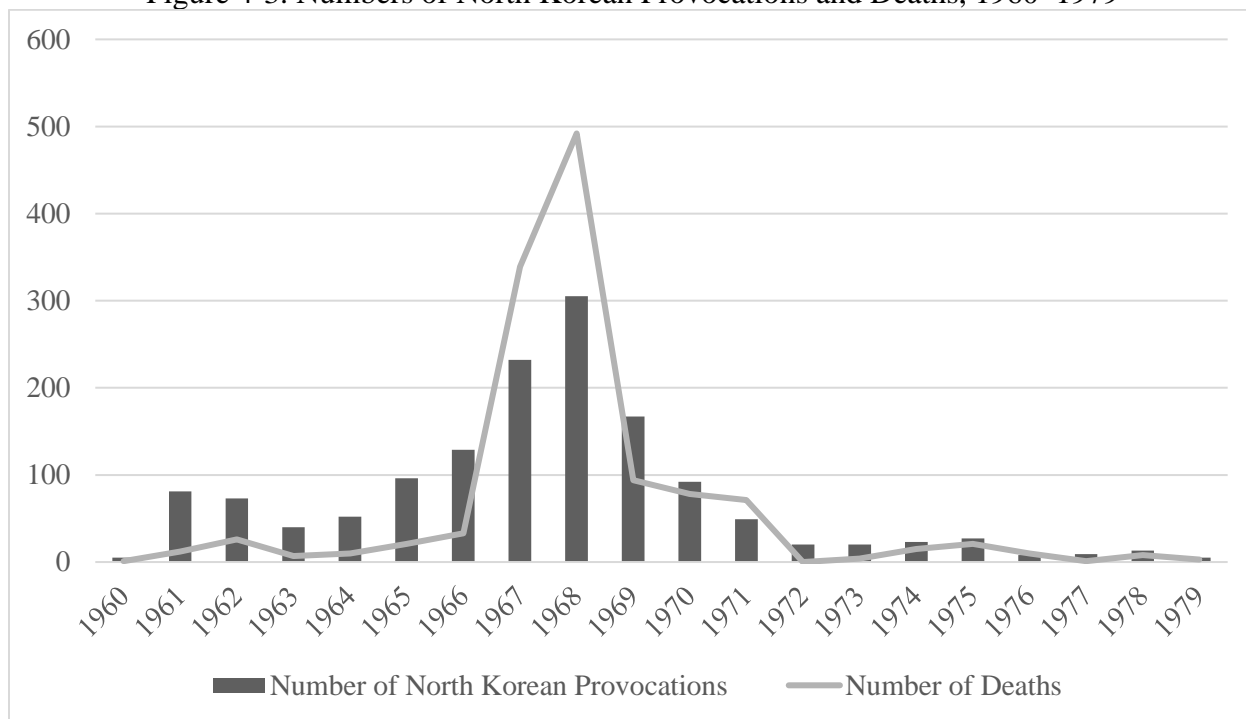
Source: Army History Department, *History of Counterinsurgency Operations, Vol. 2–6* (Gyeryong: Republic of Korea Army Headquarter, 2018); CSIS Korea Chair, "North Korean Provocations Database," CSIS Beyond Parallel, accessed July 12, 2022, https://beyondparallel.csis.org/database-north-korean-provocations/; "Digital Archive," *Chosun Ilbo*, accessed July 12, 2022, https://newslibrary.chosun.com/search/search.html.

Even after the seizure of the USS Pueblo, Washington remained tolerant of North Korea, stating that "the matter has to be considered very carefully and that we must think about rather than react immediately to the enemy's initiatives."[194] Washington was concerned that the situation in Korea could have a significant impact on the situation in Vietnam. It was keen to avoid escalating a crisis elsewhere than Vietnam.[195]

However, President Park appeared obsessed with the need to retaliate against North Korea. Washington perceived that if additional North Korean raids were to occur, South Korea would likely engage in unilateral retaliation, which would add fuel to the fire. For example, during a meeting between President Park and US Ambassador to Seoul William Porter on January 24, 1968, the former promised not to engage in unilateral retaliation out of respect for Washington's will, although he maintained that retaliation would be unavoidable if North Korea carried out any

pressures against the US Asian policy. See "Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, January 24, 1968, 2015Z," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d219.

[194] "Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, January 24, 1968, 1031Z," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d145.

[195] "Meeting on Korean Crisis Without the President, January 24, 1968," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964-1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d220.

further attacks.[196] Park also argued that Pyongyang could only be dissuaded from engaging in aggressive actions through firm responses. Thus, Park heightened the combat readiness of South Korea's armed forces by placing them on high alert. His government also agitated for increased public support of retaliatory measures against North Korea. Washington became concerned about the atmosphere in Seoul, which General Charles Bonesteel, the US/UN commander in Korea, described as an "orgy of emotionalism."[197]

For Cyrus Vance, who traveled to Seoul to meet with President Park as President Johnson's special envoy, the possibility of Seoul's unilateral retaliation was troublesome.[198] In a memo to Johnson, Vance stated that Park's fears for his own safety and the safety of his family markedly increased "the unfortunate psychological effects" of North Korean provocations on him. Park was in a "highly emotional" state following the Blue House Raid. Vance also noted Park's heavy drinking to be a compounding problem that made him highly "volatile, frustrated, and introspective." He concluded that given Park's seemingly unstable condition, the situation in Korea remained acutely dangerous. In particular, the South Korean government was controlled solely by Park himself—no governmental official was willing to challenge Park or offer him tempered advice. In Vance's estimation, if war broke out as a result, "the prospects of American troops becoming immediately involved in combat with North Korean forces are extremely high," meaning that "the lives of some 12,000 American civilians (most of whom are located in the vicinity of Seoul) would be immediately endangered."[199]

Policymakers in Washington pondered how to disengage themselves from any possibility of unilateral action by the South Korean government out of concern that the US would become entangled in another war in Korea.[200] Indeed, a US policy of disengagement from the Korean Peninsula appeared inevitable in light of other factors, such as the worsening US balance of payments deficit, trends in US congressional and public attitudes that opposed the maintenance of a US protectorate relationship with South Korea, the degree of South Korea's economic development, the growing unpredictability of the South Korean leadership, and the increasingly belligerent behavior of North Korea.

Vance recommended the establishment of an interagency study group to re-evaluate US policy toward Korea.[201] In March 1968, in response to this recommendation, the State Department led the formation of the Korea Study Group, which submitted a review paper on US policy toward Korea on June 15, 1968. In essence, the review paper suggested that "the need to change our approach is increasingly evident," although "The US must long retain a real though diminishing

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[196] "Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, January 24, 1968, 1031Z."
[197] "Telegram From the Commander in Chief, United States Forces, Korea (Bonesteel) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Sharp), February 7, 1968," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d160.
[198] "Memorandum From Cyrus R. Vance to President Johnson, February 20, 1968," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d181.
[199] All quotes are taken from "Memorandum From Cyrus R. Vance to President Johnson, February 20, 1968."
[200] "Notes of the President's Meeting With Cyrus R. Vance, February 15, 1968," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d180.
[201] "Memorandum From Cyrus R. Vance to President Johnson, February 20, 1968."

role in support of [South Korea]."[202] The review paper proposed a security strategy whereby the US government would "eliminate the risk that US combat forces would have to be committed to help the ROK repel a new North Korean attack" and increase its freedom of action in all contingencies. In accordance with this strategy, the report recommended a gradual reduction in US force levels in Korea, accompanied by the eventual relinquishment of US operational control over South Korean forces and the ongoing reduction of US economic assistance. The review paper assumed that by the time this course of action began in 1970, the Vietnam War would have ended, meaning that the South Korean troops stationed there would have returned home.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion suggests three key conclusions regarding this dissertation's main topic—what drove the changes in the alliance's cohesion. First, the US effort to transform the US–South Korea alliance was primarily driven by the burden of economic costs. During the 1960s, the growing US balance of payments deficit necessitated adjustments to US military expenditures and reductions in US foreign aid. Simultaneously, the rise in strategic importance of Latin America and the need to support Third World countries modified US foreign aid priorities. In this context, the cost of US spending on the Korean Peninsula, where two US divisions were stationed and where the US spent most of its aid budget, was reviewed first. In other words, the pressure to reduce security expenditures in relation to South Korea had increased. This factor was decisive in the US decision to initiate discussions regarding the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea and the transfer of the MAP to the South Korean government.

Second, as the US made efforts to reduce the alliance costs, South Korea was concerned about the deterrence deficit such efforts would create, which elevated its fear of US abandonment. In particular, memories of the Korean War, which occurred following the withdrawal of US forces from Korea, rendered the fear of US abandonment even more intense. South Korea's immediate response was to actively propose sending combat troops to Vietnam in order to offset US defense spending in Korea and share the burden in Vietnam. In return, Seoul demanded that the US maintain its force level in Korea, postpone the MAP transfer, and increase its economic aid.[203]

Third, the participation of the South Korean military in the Vietnam War played a crucial role in enhancing the cohesiveness of the US–South Korea alliance. By demonstrating its preparedness, the South Korean military showcased its ability to share the defense burden in Korea. Furthermore, the Vietnam War reinforced the US economic commitment to South Korea and

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[202] "Paper Prepared by the Policy Planning Council of the Department of State, June 15, 1968," in *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d201.

[203] Prior research suggests that South Korea's deployment of troops to Vietnam was motivated by the potential for economic gains. However, as described in the preceding conversations, Seoul's decision to send troops was mainly made for national security purposes, including strengthening South Korea–US relations, preventing the withdrawal of US troops from Korea, and suspending the transfer of MAP to the Korean government. It is true that Seoul demanded economic support during the deployment negotiations, but economic interests were not its primary objective.

strengthened the relationship between the two countries, leading to a stronger sense of solidarity. However, as North Korea's provocations intensified during the late 1960s, Washington started to rethink the potential risks of involvement in Korea. As a result, the temporarily restored alliance cohesion faced another crisis.

Chapter 5. Erosion

Crisis in US–South Korea Alliance Cohesion

The Nixon administration's foreign policy faced unprecedented domestic challenges from the outset, including a worsening balance of payments, rising unemployment and inflationary pressure, and growing anti-war sentiment concerning the Vietnam War. If Washington were to reduce the US military presence in various parts of the world as well as its financial aid to its allies, such action would imply that the US had relinquished its special obligation as a guardian of the free world supporting the West both militarily and economically. As reflected in the statement that "We can't let the United States be a second-rate power," President Nixon felt a sense of urgency with regard to preventing the nation from losing its leadership.[204] Hence, the Nixon administration's most pressing issue was to strike a balance between the domestic constraints and the demands of its global strategy. This required Washington to undertake a significant foreign policy shift to prioritize its core interests while reducing involvement in less important areas. South Korea was at the center of this shift, and it was greatly impacted by the associated policy changes. This chapter will examine how the deteriorating economic conditions, weakening domestic political support, and changes in strategic priorities in the US affected the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance.

Nixon Doctrine and Détente

There was a balance of payment deficit pressure on the US government when Nixon took office in 1969. The balance of payments problem worsened during the Johnson administration due to its expansionary policies, such as the Great Society programs and the Vietnam War. Moreover, during the 1960s, the US economy's overall competitiveness began to lag behind that of European countries and Japan. In fact, in the 1960s, European and Japanese manufacturers advanced up the product ladder, improving their marketing and quality-control practices. Thus, they emerged as serious competitors to US industries.[205] Such a trend can be seen in the steady deterioration of the US current account balance,[206] which declined from a surplus of nearly $7

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[204] Nixon-Kissinger TeleCon, December 3, 1970, quoted in Daniel Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 47.

[205] For example, in the 1960s, Europe and Japan emerged as strong competitors in markets for the US automobile and steel industries. In the case of steel, these pressures culminated in the implementation of voluntary steel quotas in 1968, under which foreign producers agreed to limit exports to the US market. In the case of automobiles, the 1965 auto pact with Canada allowed US companies to move component production and assembly to Canada, reflecting the realities of cost competition.

[206] A country's current account is one of the two components of its balance of payments—the other is the capital account (or the financial account). Current account consists of the balance of trade, net foreign investment income, and net unilateral transfers (including foreign aid). Thus, the current account balance measures a country's earnings

billion in 1964 to a deficit of around $6 billion in 1972. As a consequence, Barry Eichengreen emphasizes that "the 1960s was a decade of secularly declining U.S. international competitiveness."[207]

Figure 5-1. US Current Account Balance (Billion Dollars)
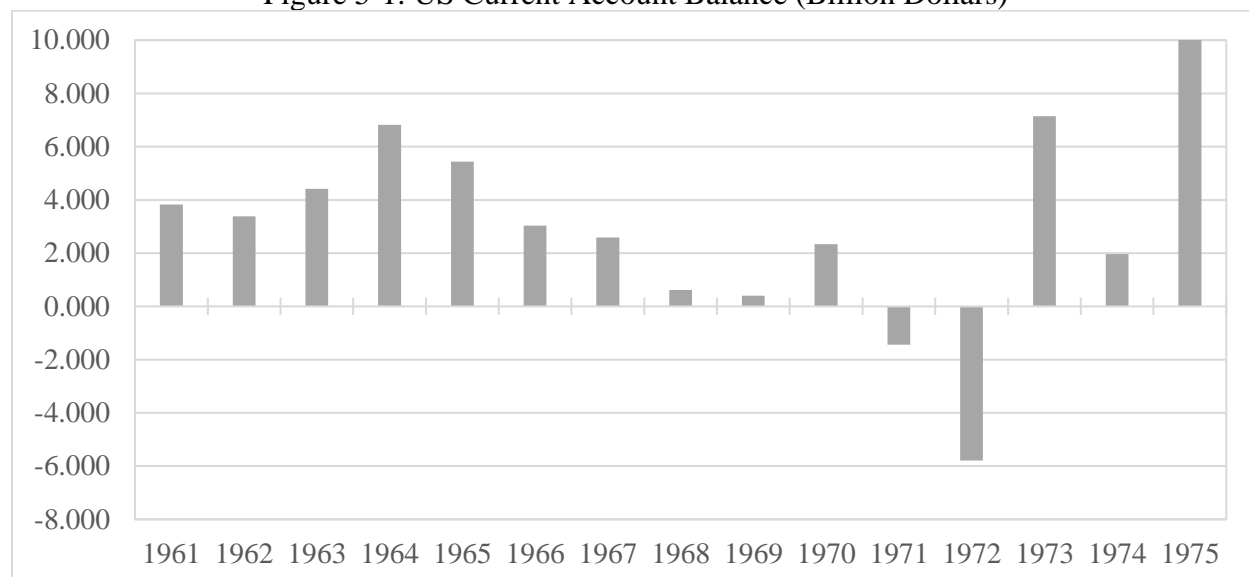
Source: "Balance of Current Account," Federal Reserve Economic Data, St. Louis Fed, accessed January 6, 2023, https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/BOPBCAA.

As the net outflow of US dollars intensified, the dollar became overvalued relative to gold, which meant that gold was significantly more expensive than the Bretton Woods system's official gold–dollar exchange rate of $35 per ounce. Despite this, the Bretton Woods system was able to survive because a shared interest in the stability of the international monetary system prevented foreign central banks from rushing to convert their dollar balances into gold. In addition, the system was supported by foreign central banks due to US threats of retaliation against countries that exchanged dollars for gold.[208] Otherwise, the Bretton Woods system may have been abolished earlier, which would have significantly harmed Washington's global leadership position. As a result of this situation, if the US government had increased its overseas expenditures—for example, its overseas military spending and foreign aid budget—the dollar's net loss would have increased and its overvaluation relative to gold worsened. Thus, the Nixon administration faced tremendous pressure to implement spending cuts from the time of taking office.

Moreover, Nixon inherited not only a fragile economy, but also an intractable war in Vietnam. US involvement in the Vietnam War peaked in 1968, when 16,899 young soldiers were killed in

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and spendings abroad and represents a country's foreign trade. A current account surplus indicates that a country's net foreign assets (assets minus liabilities) increased in value, whereas a current account deficit indicates that they decreased. The calculation includes both government and private payments. It is called the current account because most goods and services are consumed during the current accounting period.

[207] Barry Eichengreen, "From Benign Neglect to Malignant Preoccupation: U.S. Balance-Of-Payments Policy in the 1960s," National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper Series 7630 (March 2000), 5.

[208] Ibid.

a single year. By the end of 1969, the total number of American casualties of the war exceeded 48,000.[209] The US remained the world's most powerful country, although it was unable to defeat significantly weaker adversaries in Vietnam.

The Vietnam War was primarily a fight against the communist government of North Vietnam and the guerillas of the National Liberation Front, but it also represented a trial of American resolve. Therefore, as Daniel Sargent notes, "the war had worldwide implications that eclipsed those regional stakes."[210] This was also the consensus view of Washington policymakers at the time. Indeed, Under Secretary of State Elliot Richardson stated that "For the real point of Viet-Nam is not Viet-Nam itself but our world-wide role."[211] Nixon concurred, commenting that "I am utterly convinced that how we end this war will determine the future of the U.S. in the world."[212] In fact, Nixon foresaw that "Our defeat and humiliation in South Vietnam without question would promote recklessness in the councils of those great powers who have not yet abandoned their goals of world conquest."[213] He also emphasized that such an outcome "would spark violence wherever our commitments help maintain the peace—in the Middle East, in Berlin, eventually even in the Western Hemisphere."[214] Thus, a decision to withdraw from Vietnam would be a decision to abdicate US global leadership responsibilities. "What was at stake," Nixon insisted, was "the survival of the U.S. as a world power with the will to use this power."[215]

In addition to the Vietnam War having implications worldwide, the Nixon administration was unable to dismiss the war's economic consequences for the US in particular. With the Vietnam War costing nearly $2 billion per month at its peak, US spending on the war severely destabilized the country's balance of payments.[216] Indeed, the March 1968 dollar crisis, which led to the dissolution of the London Gold Pool, was a clear indication of the war's corrosive effect on the US economy. The new administration faced a problem for which there was no easy solution. As Washington sought to maintain its commitment to the defense of South Vietnam while minimizing the costs associated with the war, the Nixon administration's Vietnamization policy emerged from the shadows. It was Defense Secretary Melvin Laird's idea to shift the burden of the war to Saigon by reducing US involvement and bolstering the capabilities of the

[209] "Vietnam War U.S. Military Fatal Casualty Statistics," Military Records, National Archives, accessed January 7, 2023, https://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics.

[210] Daniel Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 48.

[211] "Letter From the Under Secretary of State (Richardson) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), October 27, 1969," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976,* Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2003), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d42.

[212] Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 969.

[213] Richard Nixon, "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam, November 3, 1969," Presidential Speeches, UVA Miller Center, accessed January 7, 2023, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/november-3-1969-address-nation-war-vietnam.

[214] Ibid.

[215] "Memorandum of Conversation, October 17, 1969," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976,* Volume VI, Vietnam, January 1969–July 1970 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2006), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v06/d137; also referred to Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, 49.

[216] Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, 49.

South Vietnamese military. The withdrawal of US troops proceeded rapidly. In 1968, more than 530,000 US troops were deployed in Vietnam. By 1972, however, only 24,200 troops remained (see Figure 5-2 below).[217] As the majority of the American public supported ending the war, the political and economic benefits of this policy were obvious, which explains why Washington supported Vietnamization.[218]

Figure 5-2. US Military Forces in Vietnam, 1964–72
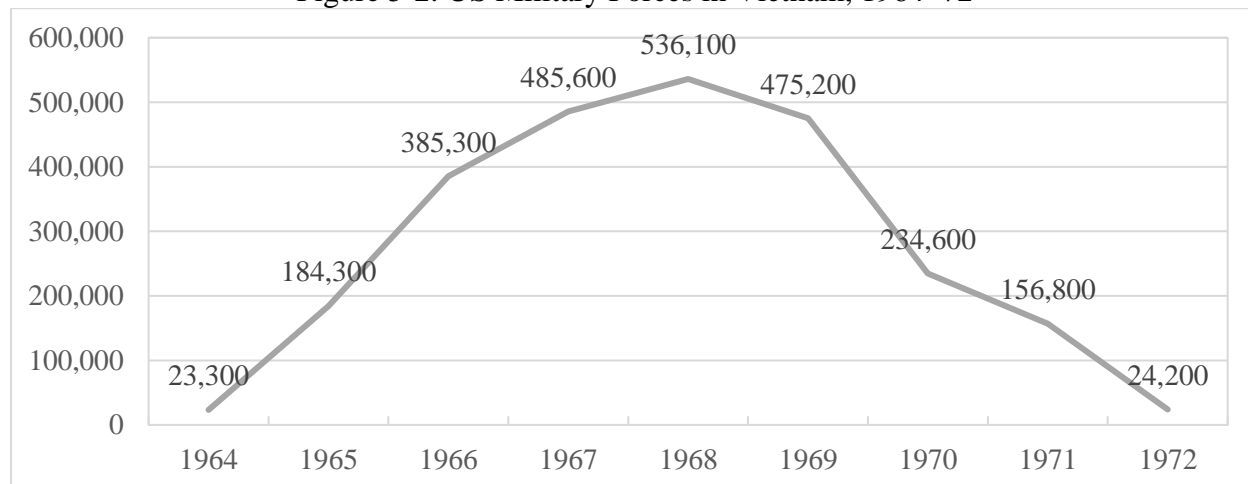
Source: "Infographic: The Vietnam War: Military Statistics," History Resources, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, accessed January 8, 2023, https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/teaching-resource/infographic-vietnam-war-military-statistics.

Subsequently, Washington applied the logic of Vietnamization to its foreign policy concerning the entire Asian region. On July 25, 1969, during a visit to Guam, President Nixon announced new strategic guidelines for future US policy toward countries in Asia, namely the Nixon Doctrine. In his remarks, Nixon affirmed that the US "will keep [its] treaty commitments."[219] Yet, "the United States," Nixon stated, "is going to encourage and has a right to expect that this problem will be increasingly handled by, and the responsibility for it taken by, the Asian nations themselves." Later, in an address to the nation regarding the Vietnam War on November 3, 1969, Nixon laid down the three principles of the new doctrine:

First, the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments.

Second, we shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security.

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[217] "Infographic: The Vietnam War: Military Statistics," History Resources, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, accessed January 8, 2023, https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/teaching-resource/infographic-vietnam-war-military-statistics.

[218] The public support for the Vietnam War had steadily decreased since US decision to combat involvement in August 1965. In August 1965, more than 60 percent of respondents supported the war, but only 35 percent did so in August 1968, according to Gallup polls. Due to low public support for the war, the Vietnamization policy benefited the Nixon administration politically. See "Public Opinion and the Vietnam War," Digital History, University of Houston, accessed January 8, 2023, https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/vietnam/vietnam_pubopinion.cfm.

[219] Richard Nixon, "Informal Remarks in Guam With Newsmen," The American Presidency Project, July 25, 1969, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/informal-remarks-guam-with-newsmen.

Third, in cases involving other types of aggression, we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.[220]

As to the meaning of the Nixon Doctrine, the *Washington Post* concluded that "This is a formula for an American retreat."[221] However, for policymakers in Washington, the new doctrine represented a device "to make it possible for us to play a role—and play it better, more effectively than if we continued the policy of the past in which we assume such a dominant position."[222] The rationale here was straightforward: given the prevailing economic and political constraints, the doctrine aimed to maintain US forces overseas with the support of US allies. Thus, as Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird emphasized, the Nixon Doctrine "is an approach to world affairs that combines both high principles and practical realism."[223] The doctrine was considered pragmatic, as it accurately reflected the reality that the US could not "spend in peacetime more than 7 percent of the gross national product on defense," while also utilizing "the combination of resources available to us and to our friends and allies in a way best calculated to deter war."[224]

The Nixon Doctrine was elaborated in a report titled "A New Strategy for Peace" that was submitted to Congress on February 18, 1970.[225] This report represented the so-called "Structure of Peace," the first official document on foreign policy and national security issued by the Nixon administration. Ultimately, it served as the foundation for American foreign policy until the Ford administration. In addition to the Nixon Doctrine, the associated strategy included the US military posture and détente policy. For instance, "Partnership and the Nixon Doctrine," "America's Strength," and "An Era of Negotiation" were the three components of the Structure of Peace. More specifically, "America's Strength" detailed the new military posture discussed in National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 3, whereas "An Era of Negotiation" set out the détente policy in relation to the Soviet Union and China.

Moreover, NSSM 3 conducted a review of the US "general-purpose forces"[226] and proposed five alternative strategies for conventional force projection, ranging from the maximum to the

[220] Nixon, "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam, November 3, 1969."

[221] Chalmers M. Roberts, "How Nixon Doctrine Works," *Washington Post*, July 12, 1970, quoted in Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, 53.

[222] "Memorandum From President Nixon to His Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), February 10, 1970," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976,* Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2003), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d57.

[223] Melvin Laird, "The Nixon Doctrine: From Potential Despair to New Opportunities," in Melvin Laird et al., *The Nixon Doctrine: A Town Hall Meeting on National Security Policy* (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1972), 3.

[224] Melvin Laird, "The Nixon Doctrine," 4.

[225] Richard Nixon, "U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's: A New Strategy for Peace," A Report to the Congress, February 18, 1970.

[226] According to the NSSM 3 Interagency Steering Group, general purpose forces include: (1) ground forces with their requisite combat and logistics support; (2) tactical air forces to support ground forces, to engage enemy air forces, and to disrupt enemy supply lines; (3) anti-submarine forces and other air and naval forces to protect essential air and sea lines of communication and to provide an amphibious capability; (4) mobility forces to deploy and support forces overseas; and (5) tactical nuclear weapons for use by ground, air, and naval forces. General

minimum conventional force involvement.[227] As the purpose of the review was to find ways to cut costs, an emphasis was placed on strategies for maintaining or reducing the US overseas conventional force posture, particularly in Asia. The most expensive option was to maintain the current force level of over 23 divisions stationed in Asia, whereas the most parsimonious option was to reduce the US force level to the point where it would rely entirely on the war-fighting capabilities of local allies. Washington opted for the moderate option, which reduced the US forces stationed in Asia to 14.5 divisions and slashed $5 billion from the defense budget—resulting in a budget cut of more than 6 percent.[228] This option was termed the "one-and-a-half war (1-1/2)" military posture, which meant that the US maintained its force readiness for a war against the Soviet Union or China as well as a regional conflict such as the Vietnam War.[229] Previously, the US military posture was termed the "two-and-a-half war (2-1/2)," as the US military was prepared to fight against full-scale Soviet and Chinese attacks.[230] This formula was intended to provide "general purpose forces adequate for simultaneously meeting a major communist attack in either Europe or Asia," while also requiring allies to shoulder a larger proportion of the US military burden.[231] According to Daniel Sargent, this innovative military strategy was not a minimum option, but rather both a maximum strategy and a pre-emptive move by Nixon to preserve existing commitments within the current economic and political constraints.[232] Most importantly, as Kissinger notes, congressional sentiment during the late 1960s was such that "The cuts would probably have been far worse had not Nixon attempted to respond to the national mood by trimming the defense budget himself, and had we not eased budgetary pressures by withdrawing troops gradually from Asia."[233]

Washington's New Korea Policy

The Nixon Doctrine, Kissinger emphasizes, provided guidance on the level of US military involvement overseas.[234] Its key message was that in the new era, the US would reduce its involvement in local conflicts and shift the defense responsibility to local allies by increasing their ability to defend themselves. In this regard, President Nixon stated the following in his second foreign policy report to Congress in 1971:

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purpose ground forces—of which manpower is the primary element—are the only forces capable of exercising physical control over territory and people. Other forces, such as strategic nuclear forces or fighter bombers, can destroy enemy targets, but they cannot directly control an area or a population. See "Paper Prepared by the NSSM 3 Interagency Steering Group, September 5, 1969," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976,* Volume XXXIV, National Security Policy, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2011), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v34/d45.

[227] Ibid.

[228] NSSM 3 estimated that the new strategy would cost $76 billion annually—$5 billion less than the current military posture, which costs $81 billion annually.

[229] Nixon, "A New Strategy for Peace," 129; also refer to Kissinger *White House Years*, 221-224.

[230] Ibid., 128.

[231] Ibid., 129.

[232] Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed*, 56.

[233] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 215.

[234] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 707-708.

In the era of American predominance, we resorted to American prescriptions as well
as resources. In the new era, our friends are revitalized and increasingly self-reliant
while the American domestic consensus has been strained by 25 years of global
responsibilities. Failure to draw upon the growth of others would have stifled them
and exhausted ourselves. Partnership that was always theoretically desirable is now
physically and psychologically imperative.[235]

South Korea, in particular, was an ally with sufficient capacity for self-defense as well as the
potential to reduce its reliance on the US due to its remarkable economic growth. Furthermore,
around 64,000 US troops were stationed in Korea, resulting in an annual US expenditure of $1.5
billion to maintain those troops and aid the South Korean military—this accounted for roughly 2
percent of the entire US defense budget in 1969.[236] As a consequence, Washington regarded
South Korea, along with South Vietnam, as the top priority when reviewing US commitments
and adjusting the extent of US involvement abroad.[237]

In fact, the Nixon administration's review of US policy concerning South Korea represented a
continuation of the Johnson administration's policy review. On February 22, 1969, President
Nixon directed the interagency study group for Korea, which had been established in 1968 in
response to Vance's recommendations,[238] to draft a policy review by May 1, 1969.[239] The major
difference was that the State Department had led the interagency study during the Johnson
administration, whereas Nixon transferred supervision to the NSC, which was chaired by
Kissinger.[240]

The Interagency Planning-Programming-Budgeting Study for Korea was launched against this
background. The most important issue addressed in this study was the security vacuum that
would potentially be created by the withdrawal of US troops from Korea, in addition to the trade-
off with regard to the cost savings due to the force reduction. In other words, withdrawing
20,000 US troops could save around $450 million per year, although if the US military withdrew
those troops too much, North Korea could exploit the opportunity to provoke the South.
Following the Blue House Raid, the Pueblo Incident, and the Uljin-Samchuk commando
landings of 1968,[241] North Korea shot down the US navy reconnaissance plane EC-121 on April

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[235] Richard Nixon, "U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's: Building for Peace," A Report to the Congress, February 25,
1971.

[236] "Outlays by Superfunction and Functions: 1940-2027," Office of Management and the Budget, The White House,
accessed February 21, 2023.

[237] Nixon, "A New Strategy for Peace," 57; Nixon, "Building for Peace," 13.

[238] The Vance report is discussed in the Chapter IV.

[239] "National Security Study Memorandum 27, February 22, 1969," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, *1969–
1976*, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009),
https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d2.

[240] This NSC-led policymaking was not only a characteristic of the new South Korea policy, but also a defining
feature of the Nixon administration, wherein the Kissinger-led NSC played a central role in the development of all
US foreign policy.

[241] The Uljin-Samchuk commando landings on October 30, 1968, were a failed attempt by North Korea to establish
guerrilla camps in the Taebaek Mountains in order to overthrow the Park government and reunify Korea. About 120
North Korean commandos infiltrated from the sea in eight different coastal locations between Uljin and Samchuk on
the east coast. After the Blue House Raid on January 21, 1968, the Demilitarized Zone became more difficult to

15, 1969, which resulted in the deaths of 31 US military personnel. [242] These incidents demonstrated that North Korea's hostile intentions remained unchanged, and further, that the hasty withdrawal of US troops could significantly increase North Korea's opportunism and foster security instability on the Korean Peninsula. Thus, while the State Department and the Pentagon advocated for the withdrawal of 20,000 to 30,000 American troops from Korea, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff argued that the large-scale withdrawal of US troops in a short period of time was inappropriate, meaning that the withdrawal should be limited to two brigades or 10,000 troops. [243]

While no interagency agreement was reached regarding the size of the troop withdrawal, President Nixon tentatively decided on the alternative option of withdrawing 20,000 US troops from South Korea by the end of the FY 1971 at the National Security Council on March 4, 1970. [244] The figure of 20,000 troops implied a compromise between the proposal supported by the JCS and the proposal supported by both the Pentagon and the State Department. [245] Kissinger then proposed a new Korea policy based on this tentative decision, including the withdrawal of 20,000 US troops from South Korea. The proposed policy also suggested the relocation of US forces to a rear area in order to reduce the possibility of automatic US intervention in the event of a war on the Korean Peninsula. [246] However, as relocating the troops too far back could increase the possibility of miscalculation and adventure on the part of the North, Kissinger proposed retaining a small number of US troops in the DMZ and relocating the remainder of the US forces to the rear of the DMZ. Finally, based on Kissinger's proposals, Nixon signed NSDM 48 on March 20, 1970, which determined US policies regarding the reduction of its forces in Korea and the modernization of South Korea's military as a complement to that reduction. [247]

Seoul's Response

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penetrate, North Korea chose the east coast. However, US and South Korean forces defeated the North Korean commandos.

[242] The EC-121 incident occurred on April 15, 1969, when a US Navy EC-121 reconnaissance plane was shot down by a North Korean MiG-21 aircraft more than 90 nautical miles (167 kilometers) off the North Korean coast. All 31 Americans (30 sailors and 1 Marine) on board were killed, representing the greatest loss of US aircrew in a single incident during the Cold War.

[243] "Memorandum From Laurence E. Lynn, Jr., of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), February 26, 1970," *in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009),* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d53.

[244] "Draft Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, March 4, 1970," *in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009),* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d55.

[245] The NSSM 27 proposed five alternative force postures that the United States and South Korea would adopt following the partial withdrawal of US forces: (1) 2 US divisions plus 18 ROK divisions; (2) 2 US brigades plus 18 improved ROK divisions; (3) One US division plus 18 improved ROK divisions; (4) One US division plus 16 improved ROK divisions; and (5) A residual US force plus 18 improved ROK divisions.

[246] "Memorandum of Conversation, March 3, 1970," *in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009),* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d54.

[247] "National Security Decision Memorandum 48, March 20, 1970," *in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009),* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d56.

As its national security had been reliant on the US military presence and aid, South Korea was deeply concerned about Washington's new Asia policy. South Koreans placed a high value on the presence of US forces and the aid provided by the US to South Korea, as they were widely viewed as symbols of the US security commitment to the country. This is also why the Park government decided to send 50,000 South Korean combat troops to Vietnam in an effort to prevent the withdrawal of US forces from Korea and secure more US aid.[248]

The reduction of US forces stationed in Korea did not appear to be imminent from the South Korean perspective, which meant that the Nixon administration's decision to withdraw 20,000 US troops occurred more rapidly than Seoul had anticipated. Seoul's misjudgment was due to their belief that so long as two South Korean combat divisions remained in Vietnam, Washington would not reduce the number of US troops stationed in Korea. Thus, policymakers in Seoul anticipated that if Washington withdrew its forces from Korea, it would occur after the end of the Vietnam War.[249] However, the Nixon Doctrine appeared to confirm Seoul's long-held suspicion that Washington would eventually withdraw at least some of its troops from South Korea.

Arguably, South Korea was unprepared for the timing of the US troop withdrawal also because Washington had publicly reaffirmed and reassured its commitments to South Korean security. For example, while President Nixon had already directed the Korea policy review in May 1969 with regard to the force reduction, he met with President Park on August 21 of the same year and stated that Washington had no intention of reducing the level of US forces in Korea so long as Kim Il Sung continued to engage in provocations. Furthermore, Nixon added that regardless of public opinion, the withdrawal of American troops from South Korea would be regarded as an exception to the Nixon Doctrine.[250] Given that Nixon had considered the force reduction since his early inauguration, the assurance he gave to Park at the summit effectively concealed Washington's intention.[251]

In the meantime, Seoul became increasingly aware that the US was reassessing its policy toward Korea. On January 20, 1970, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird informed South Korean Ambassador Kim Dong-jo that a review of US troop withdrawals from the Korean Peninsula was underway. The following day, Ambassador Kim contacted Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, to confirm if Laird's comments regarding troop withdrawals were true. The State Department attempted to reassure Kim by stating that "Secretary Laird was not saying any [US Government] decisions had been made or that there would be any immediate U.S. troop withdrawals. Rather he was emphasizing the importance of

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[248] See Chapter 4.

[249] Kim Chong-ryom, *A 30-Year History of Korean Economic Policy [한국 경제정책 30 년사]* (Seoul: JoongAng Ilbosa, 1990), 316. Note: Kim Chong-ryom was the Blue House chief of staff from 1969 to 1978.

[250] Sang-yoon Ma, "Alliance for Self-Reliance: R.O.K.–U.S. Security Relations, 1968–71," *Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 1 (2007): 26-27.

[251] For example, in Nixon's memo to Kissinger, Nixon stated that "I think the time has come to reduce our Korean presence. We could not do so because of the EC 121 at any earlier date but I do not want us to continue to temporize with this problem." This indicates that Nixon had considered reducing US forces in Korea prior to the EC-121 incident that occurred on April 15, 1969. See "Memorandum from President Nixon to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), November 24, 1969," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, *1969–1976*, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d45.

additional MAP for modernization of [South Korean] forces."[252] It also tried to prevent Kim from disclosing what he had heard from Laird to Seoul; however, contrary to his promise, Kim reported the top-secret information to President Park.[253]

In February 1970, after its long-held suspicions regarding the US commitment were confirmed, Seoul established a special committee to discuss how to respond to Washington's new Korea policy. The committee met daily for around three months and devised a two-sided strategy for negotiations with Washington. This strategy involved actively opposing US troop withdrawals and tying the issue to other issues, such as force modernization and US military aid. Seoul established two policy goals in relation to its new negotiation strategy. First, it sought to prevent the withdrawal of US troops from Korea. Second, if the first objective proved unattainable, Seoul intended to pursue the objective of maximizing US military aid. In doing so, Seoul sought to modernize its own armed forces to the point at which South Korea could defend itself against North Korean attacks.[254]

The 1971 Agreement

The decision to withdraw 20,000 American troops from Korea through NSDM 48 marked the beginning of a new round of negotiations between the US and South Korea. A week after the issuance of NSDM 48, William Porter, US Ambassador to Seoul, informed President Park of Washington's intention to discuss the timing and conditions of the withdrawal. Simultaneously, the Nixon administration initiated consultations with Congress regarding the viability of increasing US military aid to South Korea over the following five years.[255]

Seoul responded to the US proposal regarding force withdrawals in accordance with its preconceived negotiation strategy. First, South Korean Ambassador Kim Dong-jo met with Undersecretary of State Alexis Johnson and conveyed Seoul's intention to oppose the troop reduction plan, describing Washington's decision as a "profound shock."[256] Subsequently, in a letter to President Nixon dated April 20, 1970, President Park argued that the current level of US troops should be maintained until at least 1975, rejecting the US request for consultation.[257]

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[252] "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Korea, January 29, 1970," *in Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969–1976, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d49.

[253] Ibid.

[254] Dong-jo Kim, *Our Diplomacy during the Cold War Era [냉전시대 우리 외교]* (Seoul: Munhwa Ilbosa, 2002), 243.

[255] "National Security Decision Memorandum 48," March 20, 1970.

[256] "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Korea, April 23, 1970," *in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009),* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d57.

[257] "Letter From President Nixon to Korean President Park, May 26, 1970," *in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009),* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d58.

In response to the concerns of Ambassador Kim and President Park, Washington made every effort to persuade them of the wisdom of the proposed withdrawal. Undersecretary Johnson emphasized the "political impossibility of obtaining additional MAP funds for modernization of ROK forces [from the US Congress] without a reduction in US forces."[258] In addition, President Nixon wrote President Park a letter. "I plan to brief the Congress on my proposal and seek to enlist their support," Nixon promised, "so that the processes of modernization of the Korean armed forces can begin as soon as possible."[259] However, Nixon had the same goal as other Washington officials: to gain the support of Congress, reduce the number of troops in Korea, and secure the cooperation of Seoul through the promise of more funds. Nixon wrote, "An initiative from you showing that Korea is ready to assume more of the burden of its own defense will add to Korea's image and to Congressional and public support for these greater appropriations."[260]

Washington was in no hurry. Indeed, Ambassador Porter noted the following in a telegram to the State Department:

> I suggest that while we are considering Park's hard line resistance to our proposals, and his lack of sensitivity to American domestic problems bearing on this matter, we not react hurriedly in sense of further argument with him. I suggest we keep it cool, continue our planning, and give this problem appearance of one wherein we have met our obligation to consult with him. We should continue to tell him that we have carefully considered his views, and he will hear from us as our efforts to build up his forces proceed, and as our plans develop in matter of force reduction.[261]

In June 1970, Seoul's obstinate stance began to soften. "Any reduction should be accompanied by positive measures of strengthening the Republic of Korea forces," President Park wrote in a letter to President Nixon.[262] Otherwise, the troop withdrawal could "result in weakening the deterrent or defense capability."[263] According to Park, such measures must include US military assistance with the modernization of the South Korean military as well as diplomatic assurance of the steadfast US commitment to South Korean security, which would necessitate no further force reductions. Importantly, Park emphasized that "the majority, if not all, of such measures should be implemented in advance."[264]

Washington, however, was unwilling to agree to Seoul's demands. During a meeting with South Korean Foreign Minister Choi Kyu-ha on July 6, 1970, Secretary of State William Rogers made it clear that the US could not guarantee specific assistance to any foreign government until the plans were approved by Congress. On the same day, US Ambassador Porter informed South

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[258] "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Korea," April 23, 1970.
[259] "Letter From President Nixon to Korean President Park," May 26, 1970.
[260] "Letter From President Nixon to Korean President Park," May 26, 1970.
[261] "Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, June 1, 1970," *in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009)*, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d60.
[262] "Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, June 15, 1970," *in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009)*, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d61.
[263] "Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State," June 15, 1970.
[264] "Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State," June 15, 1970.

Korean Prime Minister Chong Il-kwon that if Seoul continued to reject the consultations, Washington would begin its unilateral troop withdrawals in October 1970.[265]

In August of the same year, when Vice President Agnew visited Seoul in an effort to persuade the South Korean government to agree to the force reduction, President Park again demanded preconditions for beginning consultations with the US. These conditions included Washington's promise to provide assistance for the modernization of the South Korean military and assurance that there would be no further force reductions following the withdrawal of the 20,000 troops.[266] In response, Agnew could only reaffirm Washington's inability to provide such a guarantee to a foreign government due to the division of powers within American politics. Even if such assurances were provided by the Nixon administration, they would only cause trouble in Congress, thereby hindering the administration's efforts to support the modernization of the South Korean military.[267] In a subsequent meeting with Vice President Agnew, President Park was eventually compelled to agree to participate in consultations. Park clearly did not want the talks to be terminated, as Washington could then unilaterally proceed with the withdrawals based on its own timeline.

From September 1970 to February 1971, the two countries held a series of meetings at the working-group level. Seoul exerted significant effort to obtain the maximum amount of US military aid for modernizing its military forces, in addition to securing diplomatic assurances such as a legally binding agreement to ensure the implementation of all the promised assistance. In part, Seoul's hard bargaining strategy was successful, as the US promised to provide $1.5 billion for the South Korean force modernization. On February 6, 1971, Seoul issued a statement confirming that "The U.S. Congress has approved $150 million in additional funding for the modernization program's first year. With the addition of these supplemental funds, total military aid to Korea for FY 1971 reached $297 million." [268] Washington also accepted Seoul's request to hold Security Consultative Meetings, which entailed the respective defense secretaries meeting annually and discussing South Korean security. For Washington, this was merely a way to reassure the South Koreans with regard to the US military presence, while for Seoul it represented a huge achievement because such a high-level consultative mechanism would allow Seoul to discuss its security concerns with Washington on a regular basis, which had not previously been possible. However, Washington declined Seoul's request for consultation prior to major movements of US troops based in South Korea, although Washington had made such a promise to Tokyo when it revised the US–Japan Security Treaty in 1960.[269]

In addition to agreeing the withdrawal of one US army division, Washington and Seoul reached agreements concerning a number of other issues during the negotiations. One such agreement

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[265] Ma, "Alliance for Self-Reliance," 48.

[266] "Backchannel Telegram from the Ambassador to Korea (Porter) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), August 25, 1970," *in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009),*
https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d71.

[267] Ma, "Alliance for Self-Reliance," 52.

[268] Ma, "Alliance for Self-Reliance," 55.

[269] Nick Kapur, *Japan at the Crossroads: Conflict and Compromise after Anpo* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 18.

was the decision to delay the withdrawal of the US 1st Army Corps and restructure it as a US–South Korea combined command in which US and South Korean military staff teamed up. Initially, Washington intended to withdraw the 1st Army Corps when the 7th Division departed the Korean Peninsula. However, in response to South Korea's concerns regarding a potential deterrence gap, Washington agreed to temporarily maintain the Corps as a combined command responsible for defending a key area north of Seoul. Lastly, following the withdrawal of the 7th Division from Korea, the 2nd Division was relocated to the Dongducheon area, some 30 kilometers south of the DMZ, leaving only one company at the Panmunjom joint security area. Before the relocation, the risk of automatic US involvement in a conflict on the Korean Peninsula was deemed particularly high due to the presence of US troops in the DMZ. The relocation of the 2nd Division to the south significantly reduced the likelihood that the US would automatically intervene following the outbreak of war.

Congressional Reductions in Aid to South Korea

The Nixon administration's promise to provide $1.5 billion in military aid for the modernization of the South Korean military could not be easily fulfilled due to opposition from Congress. In the end, Congress approved what the Nixon administration requested for the FY 1972, considering the withdrawal of 20,000 US troops from South Korea in 1971. Yet, for the FY 1973, Congress only approved $152 million in military aid to South Korea, not the $239 million requested by the administration, while only $133 million of the $216 million requested by the Nixon administration was approved for the FY 1974. For this reason, in July 1973, Kissinger complained that "Congressional reductions in our security assistance funds have slowed the program."[270]

Such congressional attitudes caused South Korea to lose confidence in US commitment, as described in a telegram from the US Embassy in Seoul to Washington: "US commitment to Korea is suspect. While [the South Korean Government] bolstered by administration statements, focal point of concern is congressional attitudes and fear that in conflict situation Congress (and American public) may — as in case Vietnam — deny funds and use of us forces needed to defend Korea and even force US troop withdrawals before then."[271]

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[270] "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Washington, July 25, 1973," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Volume E–12, Documents on East and Southeast Asia, 1973–1976 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12/d242.

[271] "Telegram 2685 From the Embassy in the Republic of Korea to the Department of State, April 18, 1975," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976,* Volume E–12, Documents on East and Southeast Asia, 1973–1976 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12/d267.

Figure 5-3. US Foreign Aid to South Korea, 1964–75
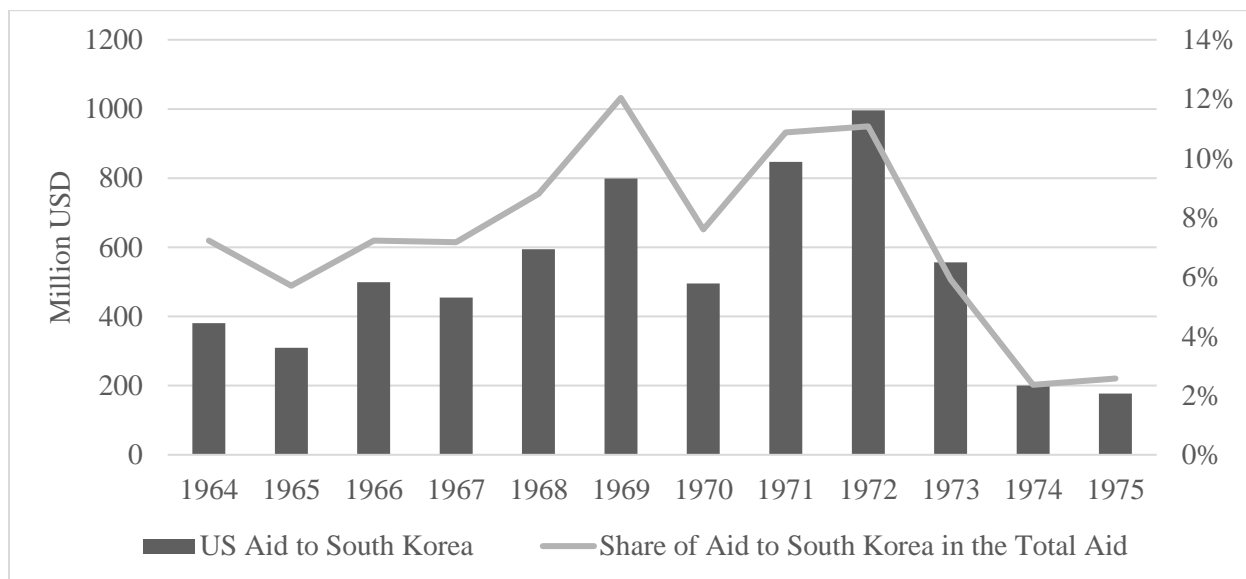
Note: US military and economic aid to South Korea had steadily increased since 1965, which was when Seoul began sending combat troops to participate in the Vietnam War, and it reached nearly $1 billion in 1972, the year after the US force withdrawal agreement of 1971. However, after Congress reduced the security assistance program, US aid to South Korea began to decline. Meanwhile, South Korea received nearly 12 percent of the total US aid budget in 1972, although its portion decreased to only 2 percent in 1974 and 1975.

Source: US Agency for International Development (USAID), "Foreign Assistance Data," ForeignAssistance.gov, accessed February 26, 2023, https://www.foreignassistance.gov/data; Emily M. Morgenstern and Nick M. Brown, "Foreign Assistance: An Introduction to U.S. Programs and Policy," CRS Report R40213, Congressional Research Service, last updated January 10, 2022, https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R40213.

Congress's reluctance in relation to the provision of military aid to South Korea was in part due to the worsening economic situation and growing anti-war sentiment in the US. Congress was skeptical about increasing the amount of military aid to South Korea and other aid recipients, requiring in-depth scrutiny of the effectiveness of military aid.[272]

During the 1970s, the US economy experienced considerable turmoil.[273] As a result of the gradual decline of manufacturing in the US when compared with competing manufacturing in the rest of the world, the US began to experience an export trade deficit from the early 1970s. One reason for this deficit was the fact that the US dollar was pegged to gold, making it a strong currency and rendering American products more expensive abroad. To make American goods cheaper overseas, Nixon suspended the convertibility of the dollar into gold via the introduction of the "New Economic Policy" in August 1971, following consultation with Federal Reserve Chairman Arthur Burns, Treasury Secretary John Connally, and Undersecretary for International

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[272] "District of Columbia Appropriations for 1973," Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, Ninety-second Congress, Volume 61, Part 2 (1972): 739-740.

[273] Charles S. Maier, ""Malaise": The Crisis of Capitalism in the 1970s," in Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, and Daniel J. Sargent eds., *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 25-48.

Monetary Affairs Paul Volcker.[274] However, this policy was not successful in reviving US manufacturing because the US was now competing against countries with cheaper labor and raw materials. The US economy was unable to keep up with other economies such as those of Japan and Germany. Thus, US companies had to lay off workers in high-paying manufacturing jobs, relocate their factories to other regions or overseas countries to engage lower-wage workers, or increase automation. This caused the unemployment rate to surge to 6 percent and increased demand for social security in the 1970s. In addition, the inflation rate began to spike, along with the unemployment rate, due to the wage hike in the late 1960s and the ending of the Bretton Woods system (which prompted a fall in the exchange rate, a spike in the US money stock by 10 percent in a year, and domestic price inflation).[275] Moreover, the OPEC's oil embargo (or the Oil Shock) in 1973 and 1974, which quadrupled the price of oil, caused US inflation to peak at 12 percent in 1974.[276]

Figure 5-4. US Unemployment and Inflation Rates by Month, 1968–78
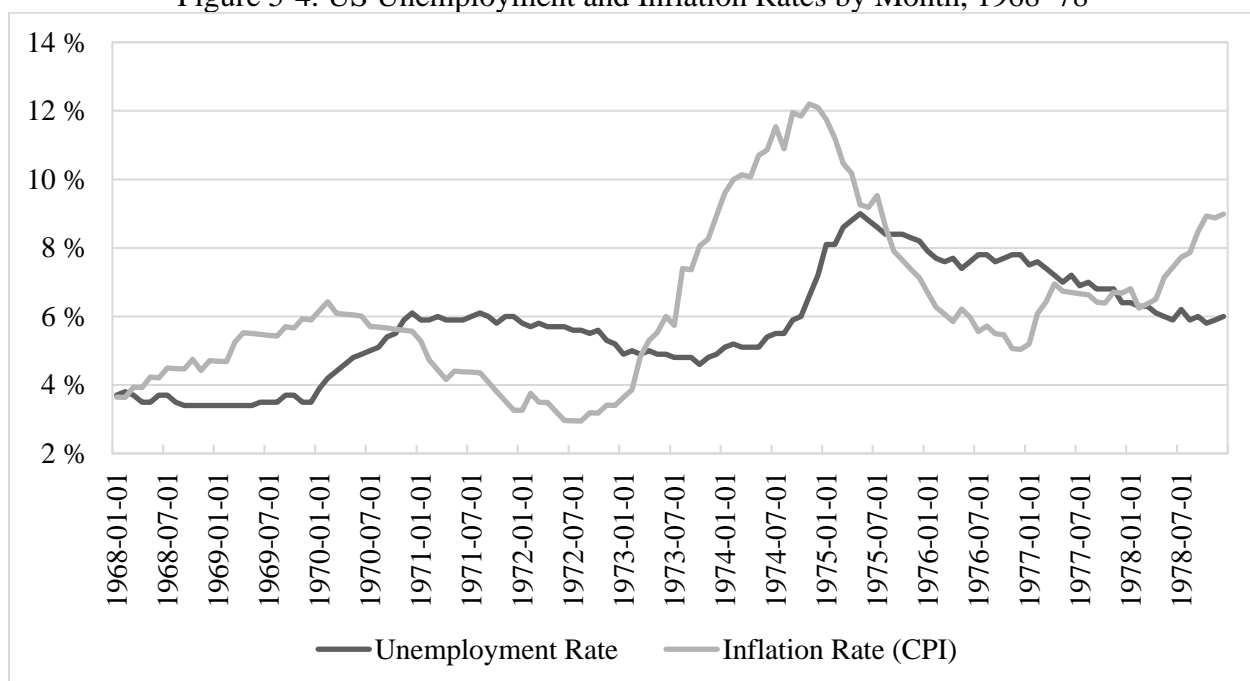
Source: "Economic Data," Federal Reserve Economic Data, St. Louis Fed, accessed February 20, 2023, https://fred.stlouisfed.org/graph/?g=3obN.

Consequently, both the Nixon administration and the US Congress focused on social and economic policy rather than on national defense. This tendency was further strengthened by the anti-war movement in the US. In particular, in May 1971, 40,000 young people and veterans took part in a series of large-scale civil protests against the Vietnam War in Washington, DC, which were known as the 1971 May Day protests. The Nixon administration had to mobilize

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[274] Paul W. McCracken, "Economic Policy in the Nixon Years," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (1996): 174.

[275] Maier, ""Malaise": The Crisis of Capitalism in the 1970s," 34.

[276] Daniel J. Sargent, "The United States and Globalization in the 1970s," in Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, and Daniel J. Sargent eds., *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 49-64.

around 10,000 federal troops (police and military), who arrested more than 12,000 people.[277] The May Day protests were said to be the largest mass protests in US history, effectively proving the strength of the anti-war sentiment in the US.[278]

Congress responded to the dire economic situation and the public sentiment by influencing the Nixon administration's budgeting process. As a result, for the first time since 1951, the US defense budget was surpassed by the human resources budget, which combines education, medical, and social security expenses (see Figure 5-5). This reversal was in part due to the administration's social reform initiatives. However, Congress was also skeptical about the wisdom of increasing the defense budget and so actively cut it during the appropriation process while increasing the budgets for human resources, transportation, and housing. For instance, in 1973, Congress cut the defense budget request from $77 billion to $73 billion, whereas it left the human resources budget request mostly unchanged.[279] Among the various budget requests, the foreign assistance budget received the most adjustments through Congress's appropriations process. In the case of the FY 1974, for example, the budget for foreign assistance was reduced by nearly 20 percent, decreasing from $7 billion to $5.7 billion.[280] Among the provided foreign assistance, the military assistance budget was around $700 million, and it was considered unacceptable for Congress to provide more than $200 million to South Korea, which had the economic capacity to cover its own defense costs.[281] As a result, for the FY 1973 and the FY 1974, the budget for the military assistance program to South Korea requested by the Nixon administration was reduced by approximately 40 percent.

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[277] John Kelly, "In 1971, Nixon Dealt with Antiwar Protesters in a Way Trump might Approve," *Washington Post*, September 30, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/in-1971-nixon-dealt-with-antiwar-protesters-in-a-way-trump-might-approve/2020/09/30/b515009c-033a-11eb-897d-3a6201d6643f_story.html.

[278] Bill Zimmerman, "The Four Stages of the Antiwar Movement," *New York Times*, October 24, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/24/opinion/vietnam-antiwar-movement.html.

[279] "Appropriations 1973: Overview," An Article from CQ Almanac 1973, accessed February 21, 2023, https://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/document.php?id=cqal73-1227868.

[280] "Appropriations 1973: Overview."

[281] "District of Columbia Appropriations for 1973."

Figure 5-5. Photo of Capitol Steps Protestors during the May Day Protests

Source: Stuart Lutz, *Street level shot of a crowd of protestors congregated on the steps of the US Capitol Building while participating in demonstrations related to the Vietnam War May Day Protests*, May 1971, photograph, Getty Images, https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/street-level-shot-of-a-crowd-of-protestors-congregated-on-news-photo/1097423918.

Figure 5-6. US Spending on National Defense and Human Resources, 1950–76

National Defense ■ Human Resources
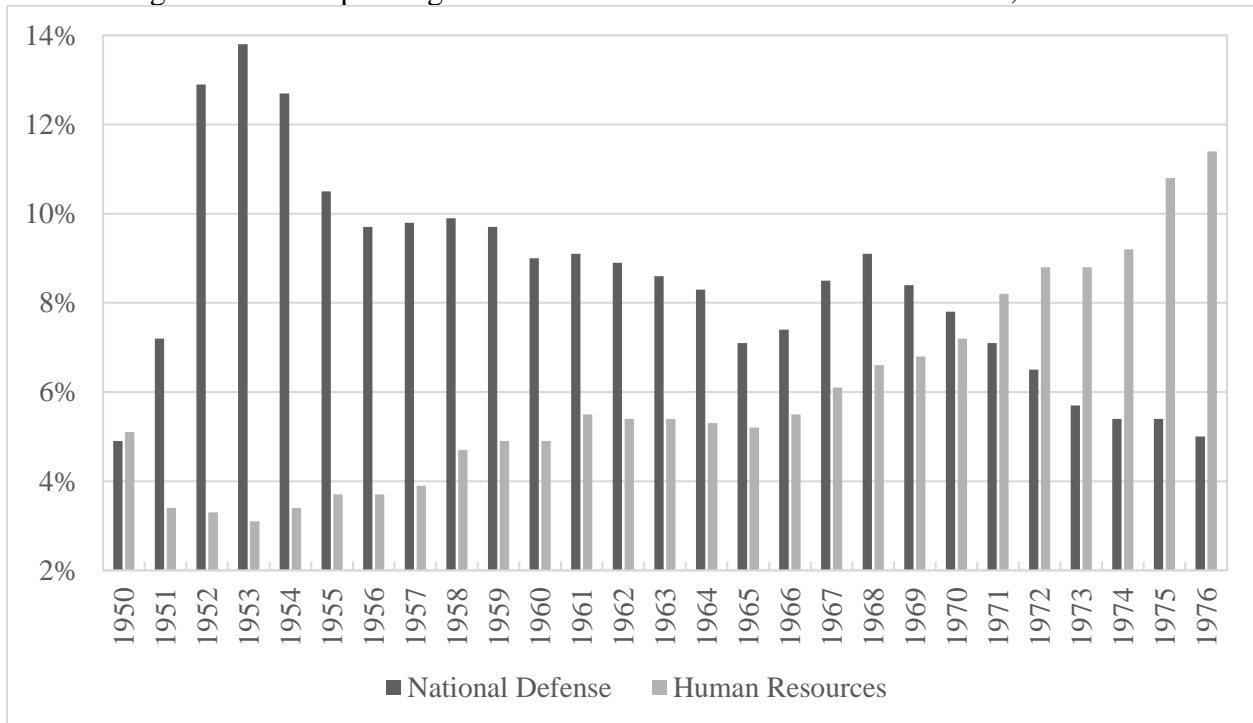
Source: "Outlays by Superfunction and Functions: 1940-2027," Office of Management and the Budget, The White House, accessed February 21, 2023, https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/historical-tables/.

The US Congress was also skeptical of the wisdom of providing military aid to South Korea due to the country's deteriorating human rights situation. In this regard, President Park Chung-hee's political oppression of the opposition party had intensified in the 1970s. In particular, Park had only narrowly defeated the opposition candidate Kim Dae-jung in the 1971 presidential election, which left Park concerned about maintaining his power in the future, prompting him to change the political institutions to ensure his long-term rule.[282] This occurred due to the so-called Yushin order ("Revitalization Reform"), which suspended the Korean constitution and allowed the president to be re-elected for an unlimited number of six-year terms by a select group of individuals (or the "National Conference for Unification").[283] Following the declaration of the Yushin order, student demonstrations and political unrest intensified. This unrest culminated in August 1973 when agents of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) kidnapped Kim Dae-jung in Tokyo due to him conducting an antigovernment campaign in the US and Japan. Moreover, the People's Revolution Party incident further worsened the human rights situation in

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[282] In December 1971, shortly after his third inauguration as president, Park declared a national emergency. Ten months later, in October 1972, he suspended the constitution and dissolved the legislature. In December, a new constitution was enacted that would allow the president to be reelected for an unlimited number of six-year terms, thereby inaugurating the Fourth Republic. The institutional structure of the Yushin order was radically different from that of the Third Republic. The National Conference for Unification (NCU) was established "to pursue peaceful unification of the fatherland." The conference was to consist of between 2,000 and 5,000 members directly elected for a six-year term by the voters. The president served as the conference's chairman. Prior to 1987, the NCU was responsible for electing the president; under this arrangement, Park was elected without opposition in 1972 and 1978.

[283] "Draft Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Korea," Korean Overseas Information Service (October 1972), 45.

Korea, with the KCIA arresting 1,024 individuals without a warrant and the Supreme Court sentencing eight of them to death. The latter group were executed only 18 hours after the announcement of the death penalty.

The US Congress considered the human rights situation in South Korea to be serious and so called for a reduction in economic and security aid, or even the withdrawal of US troops from Korea, if Seoul did not take action to improve human rights in the country. On July 30, August 5, and December 20, 1974, the House Subcommittees on Asian and Pacific Affairs and on International Organizations held hearings on the human rights issues in Korea. During the hearings on July 30, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Morton Abramowitz stated that the military aid promised for the modernization of South Korea's military had fallen far behind the original schedule, which could have a negative impact on South Korean security.[284] Yet, Congress's response was cold. "Because the South Korean Government is increasingly oppressive," House Representative Donald Fraser firmly stressed, "the military assistance to South Korea should be reduced or eliminated."[285] He argued that the Nixon administration should consider human rights to be a major factor when administering the US military assistance program. Congress's view was reflected in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974, which limited military assistance to South Korea to $145 million "until the President submits a report to the Congress after the date of enactment of this Act stating that the government of South Korea is making substantial progress in the observance of internationally recognized standards of human rights."[286]

The Ford administration, which took over after President Nixon resigned, was also aware of the seriousness of the human rights problem in South Korea. For example, during a meeting chaired by Kissinger on January 25, 1974, the US ambassador to Seoul, Philip Habib, described the situation in Seoul as follows:

> And then, finally, I think the time has come again — as it comes every few years for us in Korea to take a look at the internal political situation in Korea as it affects our interests and our commitments and determine again what our reaction should be to that internal situation. The reason I think it's important right now to take another look at it is because the authoritarian nature of the Korean Government has now been expanded, strengthened, and has reached a stage where it is generating a degree of opposition within Korea which is serious. There's always been a Korea of opposition; there's always been an authoritarian government; there's always been a degree of oppression. But the situation is now reaching a stage where I think it is serious from the standpoint of our own interests.[287]

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[284] "Human Rights in South Korea: Implications for U.S. Policy," Hearings Before the Subcommittees on Asian and Pacific Affairs and on International Organizations, House of Representatives, Ninety-third Congress (1974), 16-17.
[285] "Human Rights in South Korea: Implications for U.S. Policy," 2.
[286] "Foreign Assistance Act," Public Law 93-449, December 30, 1974, 1802.
[287] "Minutes of the Secretary of State's Staff Meeting, Washington, January 25, 1974," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976,* Volume E–12, Documents on East and Southeast Asia, 1973–1976 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12/d249.

However, for the Ford administration, there was no clear alternative other than Park Chung-hee to achieve US objectives in Korea—that is, deterring North Korean hostilities and maintaining stability on the Korean Peninsula. If Park faced a serious problem maintaining power, Washington policymakers were concerned that the situation could have a negative impact on US interests due to causing political instability in Korea and increasing the risk of North Korean adventurism. In addition, they perceived the possibility of internal disarray such that Park's loss of power could have an impact on the Korean military structure, which could override the US force presence and disposition in Korea.[288] As a result, Washington decided not to publicly criticize President Park's political oppression; rather, Washington informed Seoul that its domestic policy was negatively affecting US public opinion concerning South Korea. Moreover, Washington decided to continue the modernization of South Korea's military by reducing the level of military assistance while increasing the number of military sales through loans in response to the cut in military assistance by Congress.[289]

South Korea's Search for Self-Reliant Nuclear Weapons

Losing confidence in the US security commitments served as a key driver of Seoul's desire to pursue nuclear weapons development for self-defense purposes. While the underlying motivation for the nuclear development was North Korea's military threat, Seoul's decision was ultimately triggered by its decreasing confidence in the US commitment to South Korean security.

Although South Korea experienced a high level of provocations by North Korea during the late 1960s, including the Blue House Raid, the Pueblo Incident, and the EC-121 Incident, the 1970s were characterized by a more positive atmosphere of dialogue between the two Koreas. A case in point was the inter-Korean joint statement issued on July 4, 1972, after the chief of the KCIA, Lee Hu-rak, visited North Korea. Yet, this development in inter-Korean relations had little impact on South Korea's nuclear program, as it continued pursuing the development of nuclear weapons.

The key driver of this development was South Korea's anticipation of a gradual decrease in US security assistance. On August 21, 1969, during a summit meeting held in San Francisco, President Nixon assured President Park that the US would not withdraw its troops from Korea as along as South Korea maintained its forces in Vietnam.[290] However, the very next year, President Nixon decided to reduce the US military presence in Korea by 20,000 troops.[291] As Seoul

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[288] "Minutes of the Secretary of State's Staff Meeting, Washington, January 25, 1974."

[289] "National Security Decision Memorandum 282, Washington, January 9, 1975," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Volume E–12, Documents on East and Southeast Asia, 1973–1976 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12/d262; "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Ford, Washington, January 3, 1975," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Volume E–12, Documents on East and Southeast Asia, 1973–1976 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12/d260.

[290] Chae-Jin Lee, *A Troubled Peace: US Policy and the Two Koreas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 68.

[291] "National Security Decision Memorandum 48, March 20, 1970,"

adopted a hardline stance against Washington's decision to withdraw its forces, Vice President Agnew visited Seoul on August 25, 1970, seeking to assure President Park that there would be no more force reduction.[292] However, prior to departing for Taiwan and Vietnam the next day, Agnew reneged on his promise to President Park, stating that the US would withdraw all of its troops from Korea once the modernization of the South Korean forces was complete.[293] Following the 1971 agreement, Washington was unable to provide military assistance to South Korea as scheduled due to Congress's budget cut. In the meantime, the Pentagon considered dismantling the US–ROK combined command in an effort to prevent excessive entanglement with South Korea. All these incidents diminished South Korea's confidence in the US security commitment and prompted Seoul to seek nuclear options.

As the prospect of US troop withdrawals became imminent much more quickly than anticipated, Seoul's sense of urgency in terms of achieving self-reliant national security increased. Therefore, South Korea adopted a more realistic approach during the negotiations with the US over troop withdrawals by shifting its focus to acquiring the most assistance possible from the US. In a meeting with Melvin Laird in July 1971, President Park stated that South Korea had "no intent of asking US troops to stay in the Republic of Korea indefinitely."[294] Instead, he hoped that Washington "would retain its capability in South Korea until the ROK did attain self-sufficiency."[295] In this context, self-sufficiency was another name for the self-reliance that South Korea had been endeavoring to attain. Moreover, South Korea's nuclear program, which was codenamed "Project 890," was perceived as its own self-sufficient means of defense.[296]

Although it was unclear when South Korea would make a decision regarding nuclear development, a CIA report issued in 1978 suggested that the decision would be made in two stages.[297] First, before and after 1970, as discussions concerning the withdrawal of US troops took place, the possibility of developing nuclear weapons was explored by Seoul. In 1970, President Park reportedly said to Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil that "We do not know when the United States will leave, so let us research on nuclear weapons."[298] Later, in 1972, President Park instructed his chief of staff, Kim Chong-ryom, to acquire the necessary technology for nuclear weapons development.[299] As a result, South Korea contacted a French nuclear engineering company about the design of a reprocessing facility in 1973 and began importing heavy water reactors from Canada, which offer an advantage in terms of producing plutonium. The second

[292] "Backchannel Telegram from the Ambassador to Korea (Porter) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), August 25, 1970."

[293] James M. Naughton, "Agnew Says U.S. Aims At Full Pullout in Korea," *New York Times*, August 27, 1970, https://www.nytimes.com/1970/08/27/archives/agnew-says-us-aims-at-full-pullout-in-korea.html.

[294] "Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Laird to President Nixon, July 19, 1971," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2009), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d101.

[295] "Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Laird to President Nixon, July 19, 1971."

[296] Se Young Jang, "The Evolution of US Extended Deterrence and South Korea's Nuclear Ambitions," Journal of Strategic Studies 39, no. 4 (2016): 153.

[297] Peter Hayes and Chung-in Moon, "Park Chung Hee, the CIA, and the Bomb", NAPSNet Special Reports, September 23, 2011, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/park-chung-hee-the-cia-and-the-bomb/.

[298] "Interview with Kim Jong-phil," *JoongAng Ilbo*, July 10, 2015, quoted in Jang, "The Evolution of US Extended Deterrence and South Korea's Nuclear Ambitions," 514.

[299] Jang, "The Evolution of US Extended Deterrence and South Korea's Nuclear Ambitions," 514.

stage was Park's authorization of nuclear weapons development in 1974.[300] While there is no clear evidence available, it appears that this decision was made based on both the estimation that South Korea could acquire the necessary nuclear technology and materials and the expectation that the US would withdraw its remaining forces from Korea in just a few years. This was particularly relevant in 1974, when the US Congress cut the budget for military assistance to South Korea for the second consecutive year and discussed disbanding the US–South Korea Combined Army Corps.

Washington did not know until the end of Nixon's term in office that South Korea was running a clandestine nuclear weapons program. It was only during the Ford administration that Washington became aware of the South Korean nuclear program. In particular, following India's nuclear test in 1974, the US and Canadian media began to report potential nuclear proliferation risks in developing countries, including South Korea, Pakistan, Brazil, and Argentina.[301] Washington regarded South Korea's nuclear program as a serious issue. Certainly, it posed a significant challenge to the international nuclear nonproliferation regime, which had been in action since 1968. Furthermore, South Korea's nuclear weapons development could potentially destabilize East Asian security due to affecting not only Japan, but also due to "the Russians or the Chinese or the North Korean reaction."[302] Thus, Washington strongly opposed South Korea's decision to go nuclear and so placed a variety of pressures on South Korea. Ultimately, Kissinger sent Assistant Secretary of State and former US ambassador to Seoul Philip Habib to President Park in late 1975 to threaten that the US would cut its security ties with South Korea if Seoul continued to pursue nuclear weapons development.[303] Consequently, in January 1976, to avoid friction within its alliance with the US, Seoul ceased negotiations with France to acquire reprocessing technology, and in December 1976, it suspended its entire nuclear weapons program in response to forceful US pressure.[304]

Conclusion

The preceding discussion highlights the impacts of the deteriorating economic conditions, weakening domestic political support, and changes in strategic interests in the US on the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance. The Nixon administration faced various domestic constraints, including the balance of payments crisis, the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, high unemployment and inflation, and domestic political pressure to end the Vietnam War, which resulted in a shift toward Vietnamization and the pursuance of security through détente with the Soviet Union and China. As part of this shift, the Nixon administration sought to reduce the number of US troops stationed on the Korean Peninsula and encourage South Korea to play a

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[300] Hayes and Moon, "Park Chung Hee, the CIA, and the Bomb."

[301] John W. Finney, "Nuclear Club Could Add 24 Nations in 10 Years," New York Times, July 5, 1974, https://www.nytimes.com/1974/07/05/archives/nuclear-club-could-add-24-nations-in-10-years-the-remaining.html.

[302] Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, March 27, 1975," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976,* Volume E–12, Documents on East and Southeast Asia, 1973–1976 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12/d265.

[303] Seung-Young Kim, "Security, Nationalism and The Pursuit of Nuclear Weapons and Missiles: The South Korean Case, 1970–82," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 12, no. 4 (2001): 66.

[304] Hayes and Moon, "Park Chung Hee, the CIA, and the Bomb."

greater role in its own defense, while avoiding becoming too deeply entangled in any potential contingency in Korea. However, this decrease in the US military presence and assistance to South Korea weakened the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance, eroding South Korea's confidence in the US as a security guarantor. To ensure its security, South Korea even considered developing nuclear weapons, which could have led to a rift in the alliance. As a consequence, the period between 1969 and 1975 marked the lowest point in US–South Korea relations and the culmination of the alliance cohesion crisis.

Chapter 6. Reversal

Restoration of the Alliance Cohesion

Prior to 1975, the US–South Korea alliance was facing its lowest point. Discussions were underway in Washington about withdrawing additional troops from Korea, while Congress was hesitant to provide necessary aid to South Korea. In response to this uncertainty, Seoul pursued a domestic nuclear program to prepare for potential US disengagement. However, the situation changed with the unexpected collapse of South Vietnam in April of that year. The strategic interests of the US and its Asian allies aligned again, leading to Washington re-emphasizing the role of US military power in the Asia-Pacific region and assuring its Asian allies of US commitment. Congress also recognized the importance of maintaining a balance of power and stability in each Asian region. Consequently, Congress opposed Carter's policy of withdrawing all US ground troops from Korea, leading to the suspension of the withdrawal plan and the maintenance of the US military presence on the peninsula. This marked a turning point in the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance, which had been on the verge of collapse. In this chapter, I will examine how these changes in US strategic interests and Congressional attitudes impacted the restoration of the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion. By exploring the interplay between political decisions and strategic considerations, I will shed light on the complex dynamics that underlie this crucial turning point.

The Fall of Saigon

"[South Vietnamese] are likely to be defeated in 1976."[305]

The fall of Saigon was a strategic surprise and miscalculation for Washington policymakers. During an NSC meeting on March 28, 1975, CIA Director William Colby estimated that Saigon could withstand the communists' attack for another two years. However, the Viet Cong had already launched its final major offensive in South Vietnam on March 10. As the situation in Vietnam rapidly deteriorated, President Ford convened with the NSC again on April 9 to ask Congress for a budget for military aid, humanitarian assistance, and civilian evacuation operations in South Vietnam. [306] Yet, Congress refused to fund anything other than the

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[305] "Minutes of National Security Council Meeting, March 28, 1975," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969–1976, Volume X, Vietnam, January 1973–July 1975, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v10/d196.

[306] "Minutes of National Security Council Meeting, April 9, 1975," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969–1976, Volume X, Vietnam, January 1973–July 1975, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v10/d212.

evacuation of Americans from South Vietnam, and Saigon fell on April 30, 1975, making Vietnam a communist nation. The US had to leave Vietnam without adequate responses.

Figure 6-1. Evacuation from Saigon, April 29, 1975

Note: A member of the CIA helps evacuees up a ladder onto an Air America helicopter on the roof of a hotel half a mile from the Embassy shortly before Saigon fell to advancing North Vietnamese troops.
Source: "The Fall of Saigon (1975)," National Museum of American Diplomacy, https://diplomacy.state.gov/stories/fall-of-saigon-1975-american-diplomats-refugees/.

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was deeply worried about the impact of Vietnam's communization on its Asian allies. At the April 9 NSC meeting, Kissinger argued that "no country expected so rapid a collapse," and that while Asian allies had not publicly expressed their positions, Japan and other Asian countries were already forming their judgements.[307] Even if Asian allies did not respond quickly, they would stop at nothing. Kissinger predicted that "we will see the consequences" eventually.[308] Other Washington policymakers, however, expected that the impact would be slight. For example, CIA Director William Colby estimated that the response of US allies would be "negligible" because their level of trust on the US commitment "will be affected mainly by perceptions of U.S. behavior on issues of direct and compelling interest to the countries concerned," and that they "do not expect a reduction of U.S. power relevant to their immediate concerns."[309] An NSC staffer, Richard Smyser, also stated that Asian

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[307] "Minutes of National Security Council Meeting, April 9, 1975."
[308] "Minutes of National Security Council Meeting, April 9, 1975."
[309] "Minutes of National Security Council Meeting, April 9, 1975."

allies would respond by strengthening relations with Washington because they felt there was no alternative but the US. "Most nations in Asia," Smyser added, "apparently believe that revolutionary warfare of the Vietnamese model, like a car accident, is something that happens to other people."[310]

However, in Southeast Asia, slow but fundamental changes were taking place, just as Kissinger had feared. Southeast Asian countries were concerned that local communist insurgents would step up their subversive activities inspired by the Vietnamese communists' triumph over the US. Regional countries suspected that the US could not afford to be protectionist and provide counter-insurgency assistance to prevent the Vietnamese's success from being replicated on their soil. Thus, these countries needed to get their act together, resulting in the inaugural meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Heads of Government in Bali on February 23–24, 1976.[311]

Southeast Asian countries were also troubled by the manner in which Washington disengaged from South Vietnam. As a result, rather than relying on US promises, Southeast Asian countries chose to promote their own independent foreign policy. They dissolved the American-made Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and pursued engagement with communist countries, such as China and North Korea. Thailand opened diplomatic relations with North Korea in May 1975 and China in July 1975. President of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, visited China shortly after the Philippines ended ties with Taiwan in June 1975. The developments in Southeast Asia meant that Vietnam's communization would have significant impacts on US strategic interests regarding the containment of communism and maintaining its influence in the region. Although Washington attempted to convince them of the credibility of US commitment, Southeast Asian countries were skeptical of US efforts to turn them back. For example, during a conversation between Philippines Foreign Secretary Carlos Romulo and Kissinger on September 23, 1975, Romulo told Kissinger that the Marcos administration fully understood the US position in light of recent developments in Vietnam. He informed Kissinger, however, that Manila "had no illusions" and felt that it was time to establish relations with Beijing. Romulo also revealed that he and the Thai Foreign Minister had agreed to phase out SEATO "without any discussion of the Manila Pact."[312]

Pacific Doctrine

Washington was taking its Asian allies' independent foreign policies seriously. It was a moment when US strategic interests returned to regional allies in Asia. The need for the US to play a role as a security provider in Asia had increased, as was the need for reassurance to nervous Asian

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[310] "Memorandum for Secretary Kissinger, July 15, 1975," in Box 1, National Security Adviser, Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/exhibits/vietnam/032400018-001.pdf.

[311] Ang Cheng Guan and Joseph Chinyong Liow, "The Fall of Saigon: Southeast Asian Perspectives," Brookings, April 21, 2015, https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-fall-of-saigon-southeast-asian-perspectives/.

[312] "Memorandum of Conversation, 23 September 1975," DNSA, Kissinger Transcripts, KT01790, quoted in Guan and Liow, "The Fall of Saigon."

allies. The Ford administration had to show the return of US interests and Washington's resolve visibly. The first step was for Washington to reaffirm its commitment to the region. Following his visit to China in December 1975, President Ford headed to Indonesia and the Philippines to reassure Asian allies that the US would remain involved in Asian security. Then, on December 7, 1975, during a speech at the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii, Ford laid out the fundamental principles of the US Asia-Pacific policy, known as "the Pacific Doctrine."[313]

The key point of the Pacific Doctrine was that the US would maintain its security role in the Asia-Pacific region through its military might. President Ford emphasized that "American strength is basic to any stable balance of power in the Pacific. … we owe it to ourselves and to those whose independence depends upon our continued support to preserve a flexible and balanced position of strength throughout the Pacific."[314] Ford also noted that the US sought to maintain stability and security in Southeast Asia while normalizing its relationship with China. Furthermore, he stated that achieving peace in Asia is contingent upon resolving major political conflicts. As the *New York Times* editorial notes, President Ford's Pacific Doctrine forestalled a swing in US isolationism and marked a departure from the Nixon Doctrine, which stated that Asian nations should bear responsibility for Asian local problems.[315]

Ford ordered more specific guidelines for the US Asia-Pacific policy to be outlined in the Pacific Doctrine. Thus, the NSC reviewed the US interests and security objectives in the region through NSSM 235. This policy memorandum concluded that the US's drastic reduction of assistance to South Vietnam and "the manner in which the Indo-China conflict came to an end" ushered in "a new era of some uncertainty in Southeast Asia" that cast doubt on the credibility of US commitments.[316] Thus, those Asian countries decided to assume much greater responsibility over their own destinies. However, this did not significantly alter "the major power equilibrium" among the US, the Soviet Union, China, and Japan.[317] In addition, the Indo-China situation did not bring about fundamental change in Northeast Asia, despite a reasonable increase in South Korean apprehension that North Korea might be tempted to unify the peninsula by threat or use of force. Therefore, NSSM 235 suggested that the US should continue to rely on the greater use of diplomatic and economic tools, as well as greater tactical flexibility. However, "it remains of vital importance that the US retain a flexible and strong military posture in the Asia-Pacific area. In this regard, increases in military … deployment must not be ruled out."[318]

Such rationale led the Ford administration to submit a defense budget of $112.7 billion for FY 1977 to Congress.[319] This represented a reversal of the defense spending trend, which had been

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[313] "Address by President Gerald R. Ford at the University of Hawaii, December 7, 1975," Selected Gerald R. Ford Presidential Speeches and Writings, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/speeches/750716.asp.

[314] "Address by President Gerald R. Ford at the University of Hawaii, December 7, 1975."

[315] "Pacific Doctrine," *New York Times*, December 9, 1975, https://www.nytimes.com/1975/12/09/archives/pacific-doctrine.html.

[316] "NSSM 235 - U.S. Interest and Objectives in the Asia-Pacific Region, November 5, 1976" in Box 39, National Security Council, Institutional Files, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0398/1982323.pdf.

[317] "NSSM 235 - U.S. Interest and Objectives in the Asia-Pacific Region, November 5, 1976."

[318] "NSSM 235 - U.S. Interest and Objectives in the Asia-Pacific Region, November 5, 1976.".

[319] "Defense - Budget FY1977 (1)" in Box 7, Ron Nessen Papers, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0204/1511728.pdf.

flat due to the economic crisis in the 1970s, where defense spending shifted from $82 billion in 1969 to $89 billion in 1976. In addition, the Ford administration revised the defense policy outlined in NSSM 3 during Nixon's first year in office, recognizing the need for a review of the overall US defense policy in light of the new strategic circumstances. Specifically, the Ford administration cited the following reasons to justify the necessity of a new strategy:

> The international, political, economic and military environment has changed substantially since that time: we have substantially altered our relationship with the Soviet Union; we have established a dialogue with the PRC; other centers of power have been strengthened; our relationship with developing countries has become more important; and economic issues are weighing more heavily in shaping the over-all east-west balance. As a result, there is a general consensus that a thorough new analysis of our overall defense strategy should be undertaken.[320]

Against this background, the Ford administration's last strategic directive, NSDM 348, was completed and signed by President Ford on January 20, 1977, the last day of his term. NSDM 348 emphasized the need for the general-purpose forces to be strengthened outside Europe, saying "There will be a considerable, and perhaps growing, potential for crises outside of Europe. The United States must have as one of its objectives to strengthen its worldwide capabilities. This calls for careful attention to the planning of U.S. general purpose forces for non-NATO contingencies"[321]

Strengthening the US general-purpose forces outside of NATO had significant implications for Asian allies. In the first place, it meant bolstering US naval power in the Pacific, with the potential to project power across the entire Pacific and Indian Oceans. It also entailed halting force reductions at forward defense bases, including Korea. This redirected defense policy was consistent with President Ford's Pacific Doctrine, which emphasized the significance of US military strength in preserving a stable balance of power. In this regard, the US Asian policy was modified to strengthen the US commitment to credibility through political, diplomatic, and economic endeavors, while maintaining the US military's presence in the region.

Impact on the US Korea Policy

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[320] Of particular interesting point is its timing because the presidential election was held in 1976 and from 1977 new administration would come in. In a memo on the vest of this report it says: "DOD top levels had decided that it would be important for the new administration to have this study in hand at the outset; beginning it in January would be too late. Also, the next Defense posture statement, due to be submitted to Congress in January, would benefit from the policy review. The defense planning cycle and the domestic political schedule thus appear to be the forces driving this project." See "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft) to President Ford, August 31, 1976," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969–1976, Volume XXXV, National Security Policy, 1973–1976 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2014), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v35/d101.

[321] "National Security Decision Memorandum 348, January 20, 1977," in Box 1, National Security Adviser Study Memoranda and Decision Memoranda, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0310/nsdm348.pdf.

Even before the fall of South Vietnam, security concerns in Seoul grew. Since August 1973, there had been no progress on inter-Korean dialogue, and in November 1974 and March 1975, North Korean tunnels were discovered crossing the DMZ. In addition, the inter-Korean naval engagements in the Yellow Sea from February to April 1975 made inter-Korean relations even worse. Consequently, when the Saigon government was defeated and the US abruptly withdrew from Indo-China, South Koreans' security anxiety and their suspicion of US commitments increased dramatically. In particular, North Korea pursued similar communist tactics—achieving socialist victory through subversion from the bottom; thus, the sense of urgency was exceptionally high in Seoul.

Washington was also sensing changes in Seoul's atmosphere and their growing urgency. For example, US Ambassador to Seoul, Richard Sneider, noted in a telegram to Washington that Park's concern was high "about the possibility of a North Korean military effort, aimed to test both the [South Korean] and United States' reaction ... although not in the exaggerated terms held by the Korean leadership."[322]

Sneider's primary concern was that Seoul was losing its confidence in US commitments and pursuing independent security measures, which would weaken its alliance with the US. In the same telegram, Sneider noted that President Park had "gone a considerable distance toward discounting" the credibility of US commitments. In another telegram, Sneider pointed out that "there remains a serious confidence-gap and many aspects of a 'siege mentality,' particularly in the blue house."[323] Similarly, Lt. General James Hollingsworth, commander of the 1st Combined Army Corps, reported that he believed US "non-intervention" during the final days of the South Vietnam regime led key South Korean officials to "firmly believe that they could be caught in the same situation."[324]

In Sneider's view, President Park was already looking for ways to reduce their reliance on the US and was strongly leading the nation as a whole to achieve self-defense. South Koreans knew that Washington's Korean policy and US military presence were losing support from both the American public and Congress. South Koreans had already witnessed efforts by Congress to remove US troops from Korea and to pressure Seoul to liberalize its regime by denying military aid. This uncertainty in Washington politics rendered the odds of a US commitment to Korea even less reliable.[325] In response, Park considered alternatives to US security assurance, such as

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[322] Telegram, AmEmbassy Seoul (Sneider) to SecState, "Vietnam Reaction," April 9, 1975, quoted in Leon Perkowski, "Cold War Credibility in the Shadow of Vietnam," Ph.D. Dissertation at Kent State University (2015), 222.

[323] "Telegram 2685 From the Embassy in the Republic of Korea to the Department of State, April 18, 1975," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969–1976, Volume E–12, Documents on East and Southeast Asia, 1973–1976 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12/d267.

[324] Telegram, LTG Hollingsworth to Gen Stilwell, "Discussion with His Excellency Park Chun Hee," March 30, 1975, quoted in Perkowski, "Cold War Credibility in the Shadow of Vietnam," 222.

[325] "Study Prepared by the Office of International Security Affairs in the Department of Defense, undated," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969–1976, Volume E–12, Documents on East and Southeast Asia, 1973–1976 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12/d274.

domestic nuclear weapons. Thus, Sneider emphasized the importance of sending reassurance signals to Seoul and taking steps to strengthen US security commitments.[326]

The Ford administration took steps to reassure South Korea in light of Sneider's proposal and South Korea's concerns over the situation in Indo-China. First, Washington suspended the previously contemplated withdrawal of US forces from South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Thailand. In addition, it retracted the plan for the dissolution of the US–South Korea combined army corps and halted the withdrawal of the US security company from Panmunjom. Finally, in August 1975, the Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger traveled to Seoul to reassure President Park, a move deliberately orchestrated by Washington.[327]

During the meeting with President Park, Schlesinger strived to convince Park that the US would not abandon Korea in a manner similar to Vietnam. In particular, he noted that there would be "no basic changes" in the level of US forces in Korea over the next five years.[328] "President Ford," Schlesinger added, "is unequivocal in his support of Korea," a position that dates back to 1950 when "President Ford was angered by the previous withdrawal of U.S. forces."[329] He also emphasized that Congress' position had shifted, stating: "In fact, pressures to reduce the U.S. overseas deployment in Congress have weakened. There was no effort during the 1975 Congress nor is one expected in 1976. The next effort to legislate reduction of overseas deployment, he expects, would be in 1977."[330] In his opinion, Park did not need to be concerned beyond 1977 because he expected President Ford to be re-elected, but even if that did not occur, the Democrats would not be likely to eliminate US support for South Korea.

At the same time, Schlesinger expressed concern about South Korea's nuclear program and pressed Seoul to abandon its aspirations. He pointed out that since South Korea is surrounded by great powers, such as the Soviet Union and China in Northeast Asia, it was an "illusion" that South Korea could be entirely independent and self-reliant, and that the role of the US is necessary.[331] In addition, he revealed the US plan to rotate strategic assets into South Korea, which will be most visible to adversaries, such as F-111s. In addition, Schlesinger evaluated South Korea's participation in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty on April 23, 1975 as a "sound policy," and stressed that the US "attached extreme importance to the NPT."[332] He warned that if South Korea violated the NPT and pursued nuclear weapons development, Washington's political relationship with Seoul could be undermined.

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[326] "Vietnam Reaction," April 9, 1975.

[327] "Memorandum From Thomas J. Barnes of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft), Washington, September 29, 1975," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969–1976, Volume E–12, Documents on East and Southeast Asia, 1973–1976 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12/d273.

[328] "Memorandum of Conversation, Seoul, August 27, 1975," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969–1976, Volume E–12, Documents on East and Southeast Asia, 1973–1976 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12/d271.

[329] "Memorandum of Conversation, Seoul, August 27, 1975."

[330] "Memorandum of Conversation, Seoul, August 27, 1975."

[331] "Memorandum of Conversation, Seoul, August 27, 1975."

[332] "Memorandum of Conversation, Seoul, August 27, 1975."

President Park, in turn, assured Schlesinger that South Korea had every intention of upholding the NPT obligations.[333] Park stated that he did not believe the US would remove its nuclear umbrella toward Korea. Thus, Seoul had no intention to do so under the current circumstances, although it had the capabilities to start nuclear weapons research. Park argued that Washington had misinterpreted Seoul's intentions. However, even after this meeting, Seoul continued to pursue the import of reprocessing facilities from France, and Washington imposed additional pressure on Seoul to cancel the contract. Ultimately, in early 1976, Park suspended the reprocessing project indefinitely and decided to comply with US requests to remain under the US nuclear umbrella.

Carter's Plan

Despite Schlesinger's prediction that Ford would be re-elected, Jimmy Carter won the Presidential election of 1976. Carter, by contrasting himself to previous administrations, emphasized the decision and implementation of transparent US foreign policies based on morality, human rights, and democratic principles. During his inaugural speech, he said:

> For too many years, we've been willing to adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries, sometimes abandoning our own values for theirs. We've fought fire with fire, never thinking that fire is better quenched with water. This approach failed, with Vietnam the best example of its intellectual and moral poverty. But through failure we have now found our way back to our own principles and values, and we have regained our lost confidence.

> Our policy … was guided by two principles: a belief that Soviet expansion was almost inevitable but that it must be contained, and the corresponding belief in the importance of an almost exclusive alliance among non-Communist nations on both sides of the Atlantic. That system could not last forever unchanged. Historical trends have weakened its foundation. The unifying threat of conflict with the Soviet Union has become less intensive, even though the competition has become more extensive.[334]

Carter advocated for drastic change and a break from Cold War foreign policy. The withdrawal of US ground troops from South Korea was one of Carter's first initiatives as president. Carter believed that all the US ground forces in Korea should be removed and transferred to the Middle East and Europe, which was of greater importance to US national interests, and that US air and naval support would be sufficient for South Korea's defense.

According to Don Oberdorfer, a *Washington Post* diplomatic correspondent and longtime Korea watcher, Carter's decision to withdraw ground troops from South Korea went back to the early

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[333] "Memorandum of Conversation, Seoul, August 27, 1975."

[334] "Address at Commencement Exercises at the University of Notre Dame, May 22, 1977" The American Presidency Project, UC Santa Barbara, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-commencement-exercises-the-university-notre-dame.

days of his campaign for president.[335] In 1974 and early 1975, when Carter was the governor of Georgia, he consulted with several defense experts, including retired Admiral Gene LaRocque. These experts advised Carter that the US ground troops in South Korea were in an especially dangerous condition because they were a "tripwire" intended to guarantee nearly automatic US involvement in any contingency on the Korean Peninsula.[336] Carter asked LaRocque about the US troops in Korea on the telephone, and LaRocque said "either North Korean President Kin II Sung or South Korean President Park Chung Hee or their successors could get us involved in a land war in Asia and it would tear this country apart. … We have to think of the Middle East and Europe. On a scale of importance to us, I'd put Korea about 1 and the Middle east and Europe about 10."[337]

Carter's conviction was strengthened by a meeting with Brookings officials, as his aide Stuart Eizenstat described it as "a significant development" in Carter's thinking. During the meeting, Barry Blechman, a senior fellow at Brookings, advised Carter that "we should take out the nukes [in South Korea] right off and phase out the ground troops over four or five years." For Blechman, the most important reason was to prevent the US from becoming automatically involved in a new ground war, which is what he believed South Koreans wanted.

It appeared that Carter realized the "tripwire" role of the 2nd US division in South Korea and had developed his Korean policy based on the information obtained during this time. Afterwards, Carter repeated a similar stance throughout his campaign. On May 6, 1976, in an interview with the Public Broadcasting System, Carter said that "I would prefer to withdraw all of our troops and land forces from South Korea over a period of years—3, 4 years, whatever."[338] On June 23, 1976, during his address at the Foreign Policy Association, Carter stated that "I believe it will be possible to withdraw our ground forces from South Korea on a phased basis over a time span to be determined after consultation with both South Korea and Japan."[339]

Even after the brutal murder of two American officers by North Korean guards with axes and pikes in the Joint Security Area at Panmunjom on August 18, 1976, Carter did not change his position on the ground force withdrawals from Korea. He still hoped that US ground troops could be brought home within years. For instance, while campaigning in Kansas City in October 1976 as the Democratic presidential nominee, Carter reaffirmed that he would pullout US troops from South Korea and also remove nuclear weapons if he became president. However, this time, his position was more conservative, as he called for a phased withdrawal spread out over a five-year period.[340]

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[335] Don Oberdorfer, "Carter's Decision on Korea Traced Back to January, 1975," *Washington Post*, June 12, 1977, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/06/12/carters-decision-on-korea-traced-back-to-january-1975/d21ffe33-35ae-4ef9-bcac-25b8fc999559/.

[336] Oberdorfer, "Carter's Decision on Korea Traced Back to January, 1975."

[337] Oberdorfer, "Carter's Decision on Korea Traced Back to January, 1975."

[338] "Review of the Policy Decision to Withdraw United States Ground Forces from Korea," Report of the Investigations Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Ninety-fifth Congress (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1978), 7.

[339] "Review of the Policy Decision to Withdraw United States Ground Forces from Korea," 7.

[340] Tae Hwan Ok, "President Carter's Korean Withdrawal Policy," Ph.D. Dissertation, Loyola University Chicago (1989), 18.

After his inauguration on January 20, 1977, Carter began to actively pursue the withdrawal of all US ground troops from Korea. During his news conference on March 9, 1977, President Carter made his first public confirmation of the withdrawal policy. He noted that the withdrawal would be implemented on a gradual basis, saying "a four or five-year time period is appropriate" for the process.[341] Carter also stressed that the decision was not reversible.[342]

Two hours after Carter's news conference, the Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, met with South Korean Foreign Minister Park Dong-jin at the State Department to inform him of Carter's decision to withdraw US troops from South Korea. Vance informed Park that the detailed American plan would be ready for discussion with Seoul. Park did not attempt to persuade Vance to reverse the decision, but he did express Seoul's concern that their confidence in the US commitment was diminishing. Vance depicted his South Korean counterparts' reaction as "The Koreans themselves behaved with surprising restraint, given their concern, but they made clear their fear of the withdrawals."[343]

The primary reasons for the withdrawal included the end of US involvement in Indo-China, the potential normalization of diplomatic relations with China, and the reduction of regional tensions due to economic progress in Asia. However, according to a *New York Times* report, Carter's decision also appeared to be influenced by the deteriorating human rights conditions in South Korea. A White House spokesman stated that Carter was deeply concerned "over human rights problems in Korea," because a number of South Korean activists were imprisoned or under house arrest for criticizing the dictatorship of President Park.[344] In addition, the Carter administration believed that the ideal time to implement the necessary policy changes was during the anti-Korea mood, which was generated by the Korean bribery scandal.[345]

However, this time the US military was not supportive of the plan to bring US troops back. On March 4, 1977, before the House Armed Service Committee in connection with the procurement bill, the JCS revealed its opinion on the Korea situation, emphasizing that "any precipitous change in the precariously balanced forces there, particularly with respect to the U.S. military presence, would have an unsettling and potentially destabilizing effect."[346] Three days later, the JCS submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense for his consideration. In the memo, the JCS proposed the withdrawal of about 7,000 troops from Korea by the end of 1982, rather than all ground troops, so as not to erode the deterrent and upset the military balance in Korea.

[341] "The President's News Conference, March 9, 1977," The American Presidency Project, UC Santa Barbara, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-117.

[342] "The President's News Conference, March 9, 1977."

[343] Cyrus R. Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 128.

[344] Richard Halloran, "Carter Sees Pullout from Korea by 1982," *New York Times*, March 10, 1977, https://www.nytimes.com/1977/03/10/archives/carter-sees-pullout-from-korea-by-1982-planning-withdrawal-of.html.

[345] Halloran, "Carter Sees Pullout from Korea by 1982."

[346] "Hearings on Review of the Policy Decision to Withdraw United States Ground Forces from Korea," Before the Investigations Subcommittee, Also the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Ninety-fifth Congress (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1978), 99.

The JCS added that any additional withdrawal should be postponed and the situation should be reassessed in 1982.[347]

Furthermore, among policymakers, there was little consensus on the proper rate of the troop withdrawal. According to Vance's memoir:

> Within the executive branch, opinion was also running strongly against the withdrawals. Almost all of us had serious misgivings, but the president, having made such strong public commitments so early, still felt strongly about it. In the Pentagon, civilians and generals alike were totally opposed, of course, as were most of my own associates in the East Asian Bureau, including Holbrooke. From my own experience in Korea when I was secretary of the army, and later as a special troubleshooter for President Johnson, I knew how delicate the situation was. But each time Harold Brown or I tried to raise the subject with the president, we found him adamant. Only [National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski], among the president's senior advisers, continued to favor the withdrawals. Luckily, the depth of the disagreement within the executive branch never became public, although there were a few flurries.[348]

Even the CIA came up with a revised estimate of North Korean strength: the North were stronger than expected and capable of attacking with almost no warning. Based on the new estimate, CIA director Stansfield Turner suggested a suspension of the withdrawal plan.[349] Carter, however, decided to keep his public promises by issuing Presidential Directive/NSC (PD/NSC)-12 on May 5, 1977, which announced his decision to withdraw the 2nd US Division, its supporting troops, and nuclear weapons from South Korea by the end of 1982. In addition, PD-12 stated that the US would withdraw about 6,000 troops, including one combat brigade of the 2nd Division, by the end of 1978.[350] Consequently, Carter's decision, as Vance noted, "began a difficult two-and-a-half-year period during which the policy came under increasing attack from inside and outside the government."[351]

The Singlaub Affair

In 1977, Major General John Singlaub was the chief of staff for US forces in Korea. About two weeks after Carter issued PD-12, Singlaub interviewed John Saar, Chief of *Washington Post*'s Tokyo bureau. During the interview, Singlaub bluntly criticized the Carter administration,

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[347] "Hearings on Review of the Policy Decision to Withdraw United States Ground Forces from Korea," 79-80.
[348] Vance, *Hard Choices*, 129.
[349] Oberdorfer, "Carter's Decision on Korea Traced Back to January, 1975."
[350] "Presidential Directive/NSC-12, May 5, 1977," Intelligence Resource Program, Federation of American Scientists, https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/pd/pd12.pdf.
[351] Vance, *Hard Choices*, 128.

arguing that the withdrawal policy was made without military or strategic logic, stating: "If we withdraw our ground forces on the schedule suggested it will lead to war."[352]

Shortly after making outspoken criticisms of Carter's foreign policy, Singlaub was summoned to the White House and dismissed from his Korean post. In the announcement, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown said that Singlaub was relieved because his objection to Carter's withdrawal policy made it "very difficult for him to carry out the duties of his present assignment in Korea."[353] The dismissal of Singlaub sparked a strong reaction from many military officers, who thought President Carter's decision was a "public humiliation" for a skilled and professional officer.[354] In particular, as a *New York Times* article reported, "military officers have privately expressed anger at the treatment accorded him" and "assert that General Singlaub has been 'singled out' for views that numerous officers share."[355]

Not only military officers, but politicians expressed their opinions on this affair, either for or against. Some Democrats, including Senate majority leader Robert Byrd, defended Carter's decision, while Republicans, including Senator Barry Goldwater and former California Governor Ronald Reagan, criticized Carter's decision to dismiss Singlaub. In particular, Senator Goldwater complained that he was "disturbed" by Carter's treatment of Singlaub and his withdrawal policy, which was pursued without consulting Congress. "I can't find a policy declaration," Goldwater said, "presented to the Senate Armed Services Committee, of which I am a member, and so far as I know it has not been presented to the committee on foreign affairs."[356]

The Singlaub affair was initiated by his interview with *Washington Post* correspondent John Saar, but it was enlarged by Carter himself when he dismissed Singlaub from his Korea post. Unexpectedly, this affair brought the withdrawal issue before military officers, politicians, and the American public, who had little knowledge of it. Although people had different opinions regarding this affair, overall, they agreed that the issue should be discussed and reviewed by Congress. Consequently, Democrat Representative Samuel Stratton, Chairman of the House Armed Service Investigation Subcommittee, asked the Pentagon to make Singlaub available for a public hearing. Stratton reminded the press that Congress had not yet approved Carter's withdrawal plan and had "the highest interest" in hearing opposing views on the withdrawal.[357]

Congressional Objection to Carter's Withdrawal Plan

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[352] John Saar, "U.S. General: Korea Pullout Risks War," *Washington Post*, March 19, 1977, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/05/19/us-general-korea-pullout-risks-war/3d3e85da-57fa-4c40-bcc3-9b621f87efa8/.

[353] Bernard Weinraub, "Carter Disciplines Gen. Singlaub, Who Attacked His Policy on Korea," *New York Times*, May 22, 1977, https://www.nytimes.com/1977/05/22/archives/carter-disciplines-gen-singlaub-who-attacked-his-policy-on-korea.html.

[354] Weinraub, "Carter Disciplines Gen. Singlaub, Who Attacked His Policy on Korea."

[355] Weinraub, "Carter Disciplines Gen. Singlaub, Who Attacked His Policy on Korea."

[356] Bernard Weinraub, "Carter Defends Plan to Reduce Forces in Korea," *New York Times*, May 27, 1977, https://www.nytimes.com/1977/05/27/archives/carter-defends-plan-to-reduce-forces-in-korea-carer-defends-plan-to.html.

[357] Ok, "President Carter's Korean Withdrawal Policy," 62-63.

The House Armed Services Investigations Subcommittee began the Singlaub hearing on May 25, 1977. While Singlaub was the first to appear during the hearing, he was followed by military generals, scholars, and government officials related to the withdrawal, including General Bernard Rogers, the Chief of Staff of the US Army, Prof. Morton Kaplan of Chicago University, and Mike Mansfield, US Ambassador to Japan. A total of 14 hearings were held from May 1977 to January 1978. Based on the hearings, the House Armed Services Committee published a 465-page long report, which represented how seriously Congress considered the withdrawal issue.[358]

The focus of the hearing was on whether the withdrawal of US troops from Korea had been carefully reviewed by experts on major issues, such as the impact on the deterrence against North Korean attacks. Singlaub stated that most top US military and civilian officials in Korea did not agree with Carter's withdrawal plan, nor had they been consulted on the desirability of the withdrawal decision. Singlaub testified:

> I know of no senior American or [South Korean] official that agrees with this proposal to make the withdrawal of all combat forces in the time schedule announced by the President. … Even though we were never asked the question "do you think this is desirable?", every time we were asked to comment on a series of possible withdrawal options, we made it quite clear that some would lead to disaster. And we ended up with the least desirable of some very undesirable courses of action.[359]

Congressional conservatives emphasized that Carter made the decision unilaterally and without adequate, professional military advice. [360] Moreover, Republican Representative William Whitehurst strongly recommended that the Carter administration reconsider the withdrawal policy, because it not only affected South Korean security, but also American relations with Japan and other allies.[361]

In response to Singlaub's Congressional testimony, Carter himself defended his policy at a news conference on May 26, 1977. "I certainly don't agree," Carter argued, "that there is any cause for a war to be expected."[362] He also emphasized that the US government had considered the withdrawal policy for many years and that he made the decision after adequate prior consultation with military leaders and intelligence agencies. Then, he added incorrectly that there was a request from South Korea for US troop withdrawal, saying: "President Park himself … has called for the removal completely of American troops."[363] Although Carter aimed to convince the American public of his policy and to answer questions through the news conference, as the media claimed, he could not convince everyone that Singlaub was wrong and only left the impression that his administration was pursuing the withdrawal policy unilaterally.[364]

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[358] "Hearings on Review of the Policy Decision to Withdraw United States Ground Forces from Korea."
[359] "Hearings on Review of the Policy Decision to Withdraw United States Ground Forces from Korea," 5, 16.
[360] "Hearings on Review of the Policy Decision to Withdraw United States Ground Forces from Korea," 16.
[361] "Hearings on Review of the Policy Decision to Withdraw United States Ground Forces from Korea," 48.
[362] "The President's News Conference, May 26, 1977," The American Presidency Project, UC Santa Barbara, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-107.
[363] "The President's News Conference, May 26, 1977."
[364] Ok, "President Carter's Korean Withdrawal Policy," 83.

The Singlaub affair also ignited Senatorial debates regarding Carter's withdrawal policy. Senator Barry Goldwater criticized the withdrawal policy, saying "I am convinced that this action could lead to war in South Korea."[365] He was joined by other senators, such as Republican Charles Percy, Democrat John Glenn, the new chairman of the East Asian Subcommittee, and Democrat Sam Nunn, the powerful Georgian on the Armed Services Committee.[366] Finally, during the debate on the FY 1978 State Department Authorization Act, the Senate asked whether the "United States policy toward Korea should continue to be arrived at by joint decision of the President and Congress."[367] It also asked whether the Carter administration should be required to submit to the Senate an annual report assessing the effect of the withdrawals.

Despite the Congressional resolutions asking whether the policy should be taken as a joint decision with Congress, Carter made it clear that he would proceed with his withdrawal plan as scheduled. "The President's basic decision to remove the ground combat forces had been made," a White House spokesman told reporters, emphasizing that the decision was "the sole responsibility of the Commander in Chief" and not something for which he needed permission.[368]

However, for the Carter administration, the problem was much more delicate than merely showing his tough side and standing firm. In particular, because Carter lacked broad coalitions in Congress and was committed to his signature policy, the House passed bills to block his policy of withdrawing ground forces from Korea, and the Senate expressed unexpected rebuff by refusing to endorse his plans.[369] For instance, the Carter administration intended to provide military aid to South Korea prior to withdrawing all ground forces. Yet, Congress delayed a vote on military aid to South Korea, in part due to the Korean bribery scandal but also due to its reluctance to vote for troop withdrawals. This led to the Carter administration's decision to reconsider the original withdrawal plans and pull out one combat battalion of 800 troops rather than a full combat brigade of 3,400 troops by the end of 1978.[370]

Furthermore, in direct opposition to Carter, on April 27, 1978, the House Armed Services Committee passed an amendment to the national defense authorization act, proposed by Democrat Representative Samuel Stratton, requesting that the strength of ground combat troops in Korea not be reduced below 26,000 until a peace settlement was reached.[371] A month later, on May 11, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee also passed an amendment requiring the President to provide Congress with a comprehensive report four months in advance of each troop withdrawal from South Korea.

[365] *Chicago Tribune*, June 17, 1977, quoted in Ok, "President Carter's Korean Withdrawal Policy," 95.

[366] Vance, *Hard Choices*, 128.

[367] "An Act to authorize fiscal year 1978 appropriations for the Department of State," H.R. 6689, House International Relations Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee, https://www.congress.gov/bill/95th-congress/house-bill/6689/text.

[368] "U.S. Reiterates Position on Korea," *New York Times*, June 18, 1977, https://www.nytimes.com/1977/06/18/archives/us-reiterates-position-on-korea.html.

[369] "Carter's Support in Congress," *New York Times*, June 18, 1977, https://www.nytimes.com/1977/06/18/archives/carters-support-in-congress-despite-gains-on-the-water-projects.html.

[370] Ok, "President Carter's Korean Withdrawal Policy," 199.

[371] "Significant Actions, Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense, April 28, 1978," Presidential Files, Folder: 5/1/78, Container 73, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/digital_library/sso/148878/73/SSO_148878_073_07.pdf.

When a new intelligence assessment on North Korea's military power was released, Congressional objection to the withdrawal policy became even greater. In January 1979, the US Army issued a new intelligence report which concluded that the North Korean army was far stronger than previously estimated.[372] This led to the reassessment of North Korea's combat strength based on the new data. Two months later, the CIA reported to the president that the number of North Korean troops reached about 600,000, over 25 percent larger than the previous estimate.[373] This new intelligence report increased Congressional objection to Carter's withdrawal policy. In a letter to Carter, Stratton said that "this new and disturbing information" had never been presented to his panel and called on the Carter administration "to immediately defer any further withdrawal."[374] Then, Stratton held hearings on the impact of the new intelligence on the withdrawal of military force. The Senate Armed Service Committee Pacific Study Group also sent a report to Carter urging him to suspend the pullout until risks were reassessed based on the new information. The report said:

> The withdrawal of U.S. ground forces from the Republic of Korea (ROK) should be discontinued. The new U.S. intelligence reassessment of North Korean military strength leads us to conclude that even planned improvements in South Korean forces will not compensate for withdrawal of the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division. The reassessment casts grave doubt upon the validity of earlier judgments about the nature and stability of the Korean military balance that formed the basis of the Administration's decision in May 1977 to withdraw U.S. ground troops from Korea.[375]

Finally, Carter had to suspend his plan to withdraw all ground forces from Korea. Carter formally announced on July 20, 1979, that he would halt the pullout plan based on the new intelligence assessments of North Korea's military strength and other factors, such as the steadily growing Soviet military power in East Asia. The announcement was made after having completed the withdrawal of 3,670 personnel, including 674 combat troops. The president noted in his statement that the withdrawal of the 2nd Infantry Division "will remain in abeyance."[376] Carter also stated that "the timing and pace of withdrawals beyond these will be reexamined in 1981," indicating that he would not discuss the issue for the remainder of his term.[377]

South Korean Reaction

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[372] Richard Burt, "New Study Raises U.S. Estimate of North Korean Army Strength," *New York Times*, January 4, 1979, https://www.nytimes.com/1979/01/04/archives/new-study-raises-us-estimate-of-north-korean-army-strength-stress.html.

[373] Ok, "President Carter's Korean Withdrawal Policy," 206.

[374] Burt, "New Study Raises U.S. Estimate of North Korean Army Strength."

[375] "Korea: The U.S. Troop Withdrawal Program," Report to the Pacific Study Group, Committee on Armed Services, US Senate (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1979), 1.

[376] "United States Troop Withdrawals From the Republic of Korea Statement by the President," The American Presidency Project, UC Santa Barbara, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/united-states-troop-withdrawals-from-the-republic-korea-statement-the-president.

[377] "United States Troop Withdrawals From the Republic of Korea Statement by the President."

As Carter's withdrawal plan was officially announced in March 1977, a national consensus on the opposition to the withdrawal policy was created in South Korea. From top governmental officials to political dissidents, human rights activists, and Christian church leaders, almost everyone was skeptical and seriously worried at the prospect of a new US Korea policy. They knew that North Korean forces along the DMZ line were ready to carry out surprise attacks anytime. Once all the US ground troops were removed, the US would be unable and unwilling to save South Korea from North Korean invasion.

In particular, South Koreans perceived Carter's withdrawal issue as being related to political suppression and human rights violations of the Park government. They regretted that Carter did not separate these issues and their country's security. For example, during an interview with the *New York Times*, former President Yun Po-sun warned that if the US left South Korea due to Park's human rights violations, it would challenge "America's own liberal values of human rights and democracy."[378] Moreover, South Korean Christian church leaders placed a half page advertisement in the *Washington Post* appealing for the aid of the American Christian community in changing Carter's policy. They emphasized that all churches in North Korea were eliminated, and many Christians were killed, implying that if US ground troops were removed from Korea, South Korean Christians would face the same fate.[379]

The Park government took more substantial measures as Carter confirmed his withdrawal policy at a press conference on March 9, 1977. President Park decided to reduce South Korea's traditional reliance on the US for security and began taking concrete steps to encourage the development of self-sufficient military capabilities to counter North Korea's threat. During the National Defense Day celebration in October 1977, South Korea displayed military parades emphasizing locally produced weapons. The media repeated the point that "These weapons were made in South Korea."[380] As the *New York Times* reported, "It was a step designed to encourage the defense industries and to build civilian confidence in South Korea's military ability at a time when immediate United States involvement in hostilities no longer seems automatic."[381]

At the same time, Seoul reconsidered a covert nuclear weapons program which was cancelled in 1976 because of strong US pressure. Although President Park had never affirmed the country's plan for developing nuclear weapons, Foreign Minister Park Dong-jin said at the Korean National Assembly on June 30, 1977, that South Korea could develop nuclear weapons if its survival were threatened. He added that while South Korea was a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, it would make an "independent" decision if its security were gravely compromised.[382]

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[378] "Korea Ex-President Urges U.S. Pressure," *New York Times*, March 7, 1977,
https://www.nytimes.com/1977/03/07/archives/korea-expresident-urges-us-pressure-foe-of-park-regime-feels-appeal.html.
[379] Ok, "President Carter's Korean Withdrawal Policy," 231.
[380] Andrew H. Malcolm, "South Korea Builds a Defense Industry," *New York Times*, October 10, 1977,
https://www.nytimes.com/1977/10/10/archives/south-korea-builds-a-defense-industry-stresses-selfreliance-at-time.html.
[381] Malcolm, "South Korea Builds a Defense Industry."
[382] "Official Hints South Korea Might Build Atom Bomb," *New York Times*, July 1, 1977,
https://www.nytimes.com/1977/07/01/archives/official-hints-south-korea-might-build-atom-bomb.html.

Seoul also pursued diplomatic relations with China and the Soviet Union in hopes that the two communist powers could restrain North Korea from increasing tensions. Seoul sent signals that it was eager to explore trade, cultural exchange, and sports activities. Concurrently, Seoul proposed to North Korea the exchange of goods, technology, and capital in an attempt to reestablish political negotiations that had been suspended since August 1973. Through these economic exchanges and cooperation, Seoul sought to reduce the possibility of military confrontation between the two Koreas after US force withdrawals.[383] This led to Park's proposal of new peace talks with North Korea. In a news conference on January 19, 1979, Park said that South Koreans were ready to meet with North Koreans at "anytime, anywhere, and without any conditions" for reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula.[384] In the next month, both sides met at the Panmunjom and agreed to repone the South-North Coordination Committee, which was established in 1972 but had been suspended since 1973.[385]

South Korea's pursuit of self-reliance and tensions between Washington and Seoul continued until Carter's trip to Seoul in July 1979. The summit meeting between Carter and Park reflected an estranged relationship between the two allies. President Park directly challenged Carter's withdrawal policy, while Carter did not want to hear that issue from Park, as he had already been pressured by the US Congress. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's memoir depicted the situation in greater detail:

> When [Carter] reached Seoul, he found to his intense annoyance that President Park intended to raise the [withdrawal] issue with him directly. He asked us to prevent this from happening, since he already knew Park's views. However, despite our warnings, Park began the first meeting between the two men with a forty five minute statement on the dangers that the troop withdrawal policy created for his country and the region. We could almost feel the temperature in the room drop as Park continued, through an interpreter, his assault on the policy. Sitting between the President and Harold Brown, I could feel the contained anger of the President, but there was nothing to be done but let the drama play itself out.[386]

Carter, in response, took up the issue of human rights violations under the Park regime, while ignoring Park's presentation. He pointed out that Park's dictatorship was undercutting American support for the US security commitment to South Korea. However, Park tried to defend the necessity of this strong rule by arguing that it was inevitable to defend against North Korea and to expedite economic development.

Although there was a significant difference between the two leaders on human rights, Carter focused on the higher purpose of his visit: "to renew the US commitment to the defense of South

[383] "Seoul Hopes. U.S. Shift on China Will Lead to New Talks for Korea," *New York Times*, December 17, 1978, https://www.nytimes.com/1978/12/17/archives/seoul-hopes-us-shift-on-china-will-lead-to-new-talks-for-korea.html.

[384] "Park's News Conference," *Chosun Ilbo*, January 20, 1979, https://newslibrary.chosun.com/view/article_view.html?id=1777819790120m1021&set_date=19790120&page_no=2.

[385] "South-North Meeting Resumed in a Year and Two Month," Chosun Ilbo, February 18, 1979, https://newslibrary.chosun.com/view/article_view.html?id=1780319790218m10313&set_date=19790218&page_no=3.

[386] Vance, *Hard Choices*, 129.

Korea and to demonstrate to other Asian leaders that American power in the Pacific is more than latent."[387] At the state dinner toast on July 30, 1979, Carter emphasized that "The United States has been, is, and will remain a Pacific nation and a Pacific power."[388] He also noted that "[US] military commitment to Korea's security is strong, unshakable, and enduring," and the US–South Korea alliance "will remain the bedrock of [US] foreign policy."[389]

Although Carter did not alter his position on the withdrawal policy during his trip to Korea, he did privately hint to President Park that his administration was seriously considering a total suspension of the withdrawal plan. In the meantime, Secretary Vance handed Foreign Minister Park Dong-jin a list of over 100 names of political prisoners, requesting that their release be considered.[390] In response, two weeks later, Seoul announced the release of 86 political prisoners, which was the largest release of dissidents since 1975.[391] Then, three days later, on July 20, 1979, Carter abandoned the withdrawal plan for the rest of his term of office.[392]

Since then, the discord between South Korea and the US had alleviated. Washington did not withdraw its troops until the end of the Cold War, while Seoul dropped its efforts to develop nuclear weapons. In addition, the establishment of the Combined Forces Command (CFC) in 1978 was a significant development. This was discussed as part of the military aid package for the withdrawal of US ground troops, but the creation of the CFC was pursued even after Carter abandoned his plan to withdraw the troops. The creation of the CFC resulted in two significant changes to the military cooperation and integration between the two countries. First, the command structure was changed. Prior to this, the UN Command system oversaw the South Korean military in accordance with the strategic guidance issued by the US President through the US JCS. However, the CFC received strategic guidance from the US–South Korea Military Committee, which is comprised of the JCS Chairmen of both countries. This indicated that the US consulted with South Korea when formulating and carrying out military strategies and operations. Second, officers from both the US and South Korea comprised the command of the CFC. The commander of the CFC is a US four-star general, while the deputy commander is a four-star general from South Korea. Then, all staff members are equally divided between the two militaries; for example, if the head of a division is an American officer, his deputy will be a Korean officer, and vice versa. These features allow for the substantial integration of both militaries in South Korea's defense and imply a significant increase in South Korean participation in strategic decision-making.

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[387] James P. Sterba, "Differences with Seoul on Human Rights Put Aside for Carter Visit," *New York Times*, June 30, 1979, https://www.nytimes.com/1979/06/30/archives/differences-with-seoul-on-human-rights-put-aside-for-carter-visit.html.

[388] "Seoul, Republic of Korea Toasts at the State Dinner, June 30, 1979," The American Presidency Project, UC Santa Barbara, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/seoul-republic-korea-toasts-the-state-dinner.

[389] "Seoul, Republic of Korea Toasts at the State Dinner, June 30, 1979."

[390] "U.S. Presses Seoul to Free Dissidents as Carter Departs," *New York Times*, July 2, 1979, https://www.nytimes.com/1979/07/02/archives/us-presses-seoul-to-free-dissidents-as-carter-departs-vance-submits.html.

[391] "U.S. Welcomed the Release of Prisoners," *Chosun Ilbo*, July 19, 1979, https://newslibrary.chosun.com/view/article_view.html?id=1793019790719m10111&set_date=19790719&page_no=1.

[392] Don Oberdorfer, "U.S. Troop Pullout in Korea Dropped," *Washington Post*, July 21, 1979, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/07/21/us-troop-pullout-in-korea-dropped/e1ee2810-8023-4902-9a8c-52671eb0e024/.

Conclusion

The US–South Korea alliance underwent a period of strain in the early 1970s, but its cohesiveness gradually recovered following the fall of South Vietnam in 1975. Despite President Carter's push for troop withdrawals from Korea, the number of US forces remained largely unchanged, with only 3,600 troops being withdrawn in 1978. The US also increased its military assistance to South Korea, providing direct aid, loans, and equipment transfers, while the establishment of the US–South Korea CFC in 1978 improved the consultative mechanism over strategic decision-making and military integration between the two countries. As a result of these efforts, the South Korean military took on a greater share of the responsibility for the defense of the Korean peninsula, making the alliance a more equitable labor- and cost-sharing relationship. In addition, South Korea abandoned its aspirations to develop nuclear weapons, instead relying on the US nuclear umbrella for protection. Taken together, these developments indicate that the US–South Korea alliance emerged from the crises of the 1960s and early 1970s in a strengthened position. The continued presence of US forces in Korea, increased military assistance, and improved strategic consultation mechanisms all contributed to this outcome.

The strengthening of the US–South Korea alliance cohesion was driven by two key factors: changes in US strategic interests and the opposition of the US Congress to President Carter's withdrawal policy. Following the fall of South Vietnam, Washington prioritized restoring the credibility of its commitment to Asian allies, as these allies had begun pursuing independent foreign policies. This was crucial to prevent the collapse of the US-centered international order and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region. Consequently, the US shifted its alliance policy from a restrained approach of withdrawing troops from allies to an approach of engagement and reassurance towards its Asian allies. While President Carter's plan to withdraw all ground troops from Korea was seen as a challenge to this shift in alliance policy, his plan met with opposition from Congress, including Democratic Senator Stratton, who proposed an amendment to maintain at least 26,000 US troops in Korea. Due to the Congressional objection, the Carter administration suspended additional troop withdrawals, and South Korea's confidence in the US commitment was restored. This led to the strengthening of the US–South Korea alliance cohesion, with the establishment of the CFC serving as a symbol of US commitment and military integration. This case study illustrates the significant impact of strategic interests and congressional attitudes on the cohesion of alliances. Specifically, the shift in US strategic interests towards engaging and reassuring Asian allies, and the opposition of Congress to reduce US involvement, played key roles in enhancing the alliance's cohesion.

Chapter 7. Theory of Alliance Cohesion

Two fundamental theoretical questions are commonly asked concerning international alliances. First, what factors contribute to the formation of alliances? And second, once an alliance has been established, what factors influence the level of unity among its members? This study addresses the second question, with a particular focus on the US–South Korea alliance during the 1960s and 1970s. An in-depth case study of the US–South Korea alliance exposes the insufficiency of mainstream theories, which primarily emphasize balance-of-power dynamics (i.e., the external threat hypothesis), the alliance security dilemma, and the public goods problem.[393] This chapter discusses the inadequacy of these mainstream theories and then presents an alternative hypothesis and model that emphasize the interplay among international and domestic factors.

Inadequacy of Mainstream Theories

External Threat Hypothesis

The external threat hypothesis suggests that countries cooperate in an effort to counter threats from foreign powers.[394] A heightened threat level leads to increased alliance cohesion, as alliance members aim to redress their deteriorating security situations by enhancing the deterrent effect of the alliance. The contributions of member countries to defense capabilities should correspond to their perception of the threat. Thus, balancing alliances that are facing shared and substantial threats will have the highest levels of cohesion of any type of alliance. In essence, alliance members cooperate when they are scared by external threats because "alliances are against, and only derivatively for, someone or something," as George Liska notes.[395]

The external threat hypothesis is relevant to elucidating the evolving cohesion within the US–South Korea alliance. Established in 1953, the alliance emerged as a response to the combined threat posed by China and North Korea at the time. However, following the withdrawal of Chinese forces from North Korea in 1958, the likelihood of a joint attack on South Korea by

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[393] On various hypotheses concerning international alliances, refer to Charles A. Kupchan, "NATO and the Persian Gulf: Examining Intra-Alliance Behavior," *International organization* 42, no. 2 (1988): 317-346.

[394] Related theoretical studies include George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962); Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics;* Walt, The Origins of Alliance; Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9, no. 4 (1985): 3-41; Robert G. Kaufman, "To Balance or To Bandwagon? Alignment Decisions in 1930s Europe," *Security Studies* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 417-447; Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2004).

[395] Liska, *Nations in Allliance*, 12.

China and North Korea was significantly diminished. While China retained the capacity to defend the strategically crucial North Korea if US–South Korea combined forces initiated a preemptive strike, the probability of a joint Chinese–North Korean offensive against South Korea decreased considerably. This altered the threat perception that underpinned arguments within the Kennedy administration during the 1960s concerning reducing the role of US forces in South Korea.

During the subsequent decade, the withdrawal of the US 7th Division and the role adjustment of the US 2nd Division were informed by both threat assessments of the North Korean military and capability evaluations of the South Korean military. The rationale was that the South Korean military could delay an initial attack by the North Korean military, thereby securing time for US reinforcements to arrive. The perceived threat level also shaped the Carter administration's policy on the withdrawal of US ground forces from South Korea. More specifically, the 1978 reassessment of the size and threat level of the North Korean military served as the critical basis for President Carter reconsidering the complete withdrawal of US ground forces from South Korea.

Nonetheless, the changes in the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance cannot be solely attributed to the external threat level, as there are also certain unexplained aspects. The most crucial point is the persistent pursuit of US force withdrawal from South Korea, even when North Korea's hostile intentions markedly escalated. Notably, the late 1960s witnessed frequent armed conflicts between the North and South, to the extent that it was dubbed the "Second Korean War."[396] The annual casualties resulting from these conflicts approached 1,000. The climax occurred in 1968 with the Blue House Raid, during which North Korean commandos attempted to assassinate President Park Chung-hee, followed by the capture of a US Navy intelligence vessel, the USS Pueblo, three days later. However, the US refrained from taking strong action in response to these incidents. Moreover, in 1969, despite the downing of the US reconnaissance aircraft EC-121 and the deaths of 31 US military personnel, the Nixon administration proceeded with the planned withdrawal of US forces rather than strengthening its readiness posture.

Following the withdrawal of the US 7th Division in 1971, a period of détente characterized by dialogue emerged between the North and South Koreas. Yet, starting from the mid-1970s, North Korea once again intensified its threats. In 1974, a North Korean-connected individual attempted to assassinate President Park, although First Lady Yuk Young-soo was killed instead. In 1974 and 1975, large-scale tunnels into the South constructed by North Korea were discovered, heightening the risk of a North Korean attack more than ever before. Despite such developments, the US continued to reduce the military aid it had pledged to support the modernization of South Korea's military after the withdrawal of the 7th Division. In addition, calls for the further withdrawal of US forces emerged, and talks were in progress to dissolve the 1st Combined Corps. In light of these developments, although the external threat level does contribute to the alliance's cohesion, it does not do so sufficiently to be deemed a determining driving factor.

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[396] Mitchell Lerner, "The Second Korean War," Wilson Center, Digital Archive, accessed March 30, 2023, https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/topics/second-korean-war-1967-1969

Alliance Dilemma Hypothesis

The alliance dilemma hypothesis also arises from the balancing theory, although it focuses on intra-alliance friction rather than external threats.[397] It proposes that alliance cohesion is a function of the coercive potential of the alliance's leading country and its ability to prompt cooperative behavior on the part of its weaker partners. In this sense, this hypothesis is more relevant to the context of asymmetric alliances. It is based on the assumption that member countries face an alliance dilemma when determining their degree of commitment to the alliance. This alliance dilemma between allies centers on fears of abandonment and entrapment.[398]

The risks of abandonment and entrapment are inversely related, meaning that decreasing one tends to increase the other. If one country increases its commitment to the alliance in order to mitigate its allies' fear of abandonment, the country's risk of entrapment increases because such a strong commitment may encourage the allies to engage in bold behaviors potentially contrary to the leading partner's preferences during a crisis. Conversely, if one country decreases its commitment to the alliance in an effort to reduce its risk of entrapment, such behavior will increase the allies' fear of abandonment. This inverse relationship represents the central issue within the alliance dilemma: one country's security-enhancing measures may lower its risk of entrapment but cause intra-alliance friction due to increasing the risk of abandonment facing its allies. Thus, the alliance dilemma may have the unwanted consequence of weakening the alliance's cohesion.

The alliance dilemma hypothesis offers a partial explanation for shifts in alliance cohesion, with a prominent historical example being found in the strained relationship between the US and South Korea following the 1968 Blue House Raid and Pueblo Incident. In the wake of these events, South Korea urged the US to take decisive action against North Korea. It is important to note that South Korea was a key supporter of the US during the Vietnam War, sending approximately 50,000 combat troops and receiving military and economic assistance from the US to help ensure stability on the Korean Peninsula. Yet, the US was reluctant to escalate tensions on the Korean Peninsula, fearing a situation akin to the Vietnam War. Consequently, the US engaged in diplomatic negotiations with North Korea to resolve the conflict and secure the release of the Pueblo crew.

South Korea expressed dissatisfaction with the US response and adopted an aggressive stance, vowing to retaliate if North Korea provoked further hostilities. Concerned about potential unilateral actions by South Korea, President Johnson dispatched Cyrus Vance as a special envoy to the region. Upon returning to Washington, Vance characterized South Korean President Park

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[397] Related theoretical studies include Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics"; Cha, *Alignment despite Antagonism*; Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia"; Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* 44, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 137-168.
[398] The notion of "entrapment" usually refers to involvement in unwanted conflict of the assumption of what are perceived as unnecessary and excessive defense responsibilities. "Abandonment" refers to realignment and the breaking of defense commitments, but it may also take more moderate forms, such as a member country moving closer to the adversary or ignoring the interests of partners in the designation of alliance policy and strategy.

Chung-hee as a heavy drinker, describing him as "volatile, frustrated, and introspective."[399] Vance's warning that an attack by Park on North Korea could embroil the US in a regional conflict prompted policymakers in Washington to propose a reduction in support and a policy of disengagement toward South Korea. This approach was later adopted by the Nixon administration, leading to the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea in 1971.

As the US pursued a policy of disengagement, South Korea grappled with significant security concerns. The withdrawal of US forces represented a reversal of the Brown Memorandum, wherein the US had pledged to maintain its security assistance to South Korea during the deployment of South Korean troops to Vietnam. Moreover, the anticipated military assistance from the US did not materialize as planned, fueling further mistrust in the US commitment within South Korea. As a result, President Park recognized the need for a self-reliant defense strategy, prompting South Korea to pursue a domestic nuclear program. In short, the perceived risk of entrapment by the US and the perceived risk of abandonment by South Korea led to the pursuit of disengagement and self-reliance policies, respectively, ultimately undermining the alliance's cohesion.

However, the alliance dilemma hypothesis does not fully account for the changes in the alliance's cohesion seen during the 1960s and 1970s. Notably, as North Korea's provocations intensified after 1974, South Korea perceived an increasing threat from the North. In response to the 1976 Panmunjom Incident, where North Korean soldiers killed US army officers, President Park once again expressed the need for retaliation against North Korea. Yet, during this period, US policy toward South Korea was not significantly influenced by the risk of entrapment. Instead, it shifted toward an engagement policy, as exemplified by President Ford's Pacific Doctrine. In addition, while President Carter advocated for the full withdrawal of US ground forces from South Korea, the US military argued for maintaining troops in the region, and Congress prevented the Carter administration from unilaterally withdrawing US forces. Although South Korea could have faced an increased risk of abandonment following President Carter's 1977 announcement of the complete withdrawal of US ground forces, the country did not renege on its 1976 commitment to abandon nuclear armament. In 1978, the US and South Korea established the CFC to enhance military integration and strategic consultation. This decision indicated deeper US involvement in the security of the Korean Peninsula and demonstrated South Korea's desire for alliance-reliant defense through strengthening its partnership with the US.

From this perspective, the relationship between the US and South Korea during the mid-1970s deviates from the theoretical predictions put forth by the alliance dilemma hypothesis. While this hypothesis does partially explain changes in alliance cohesion, it is insufficient on its own. Thus, to provide a more comprehensive explanation, it is necessary to identify the factors that influence the perceptions of the US and South Korea concerning the risk of entrapment and the risk of abandonment, respectively, as these elements contribute to the emergence of the alliance dilemma.

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[399] "Memorandum From Cyrus R. Vance to President Johnson, February 20, 1968," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968,* Volume XXIX, Part I, Korea (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2000), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d181.

Collective Action and Burden-Sharing Hypothesis

This hypothesis predicts that alliance cohesion may be eroded as a result of a major power's decreased level of contribution to the alliance's defense capability due to the decline of its national power. To maintain the alliance's cohesion, the minor powers should increase their level of contribution to its defense capability (or burden-sharing); otherwise, the alliance will experience the erosion of its cohesion.[400] This hypothesis is based on the assumption that the minor powers consistently contribute less than their proportionate share of the collective security provided by the alliance because they "free ride" on the major power. Despite this uneven contribution, the major power maintains the asymmetric alliance because the strategic benefits that it derives from supplying the public good (or collective security) outweigh the economic costs that it pays. When the major power has sufficient willingness and economic capability to provide the largest contribution, the minor powers have little incentive to make additional expenditures to the alliance because they expect the major power to take on the defense burdens alone while they free ride. However, if the major power perceives diminishing strategic benefits from maintaining the alliance with the minor powers, its overall national power decreases, and it does not have sufficient economic capability to sustain the provision of collective security, then the major power will reduce its contribution to the alliance. When the leader's contribution declines, the minor powers should pick up the slack, resulting in more significant burden-sharing. This would mitigate the major power's economic load and allow it to maintain its alliance relations with the minor powers. Otherwise, the asymmetric alliance's cohesion will be eroded.

This hypothesis offers a more compelling argument concerning the fluctuations seen in the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance when compared with the previous two hypotheses. More specifically, the US commitment to South Korea has been significantly influenced by changes in its economic conditions. For example, during the Kennedy administration, discussions about reducing the numbers of US forces in South Korea were prompted by the belief that the US economy could not adequately support the growing security demands in both Latin America and Southeast Asia. As a consequence, the US needed to lessen its commitment to certain regions in order to focus on new strategic priorities. In 1969, President Nixon adopted a policy of decreasing US military involvement in East Asia (known as the Nixon Doctrine), which was influenced by the US balance of payments deficit and the crisis in the Bretton Woods system due to the devaluation of the dollar. During the mid-1970s, US inability to fulfill its promise of military aid as a supplementary measure to the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea was also linked to the economic crisis caused by the Oil Shock and widespread inflation.

By contrast, as US intervention capacity weakened, the alliance's cohesion was revitalized through South Korea's shift from a free-riding policy to a burden-sharing policy. A notable example concerns Seoul's decision to send a large number of combat troops to Vietnam. When South Korea deployed two combat divisions and a brigade to Vietnam, thereby alleviating the

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[400] Related theoretical and empirical studies include John R. Oneal, "The Theory of Collective Action and Burden Sharing in NATO," *International organization* 44, no. 3 (1990): 379-402; Todd Sandler, "The Economic Theory of Alliances: A Survey," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37, no. 3 (1993): 446-483; John R. Oneal and Paul F. Diehl, "The Theory of Collective Action and NATO Defense Burdens: New Empirical Tests," *Political Research Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (1994): 373-396; Todd Sandler and Keith Hartley, "Economics of Alliances: The Lessons for Collective Action," *Journal of Economic Literature* 39, no. 3 (2001): 869-896.

US burden, the US responded by maintaining its troop levels in South Korea and significantly increasing its military assistance to the country. This led to the strengthening of the alliance's cohesion. Furthermore, in 1971, South Korea agreed to spearhead the initial defense against North Korean attacks, resulting in the relocation of the US 2nd Infantry Division south of the DMZ. This reduced the burden associated with automatic US military intervention in the event of a North Korean invasion. This development served as a critical counterpoint when President Carter later invoked the US military's role as a "tripwire" on the frontline as a significant reason for the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea.

Nonetheless, this hypothesis falls short of providing an adequate explanation because it overlooks the influence of domestic political factors. For instance, President Nixon's policy of reducing US involvement in East Asia was driven not only by economic reasons, but also by the American public's opposition to the Vietnam War. In the mid-1970s, the US failure to deliver the promised military assistance to South Korea was not solely an executive decision, as it was also a result of the US Congress cutting the military aid budget. This was the result of calls for increased social security budgets, in addition to concerns about Park Chung-hee's dictatorship and South Korea's dire human rights situation. Furthermore, President Carter's policy of withdrawing US ground forces from South Korea was not directly influenced by the US economic situation. Due to the aggressive interest rate hike policy implemented by Arthur Burns' Federal Reserve Bank, the inflation situation in the US temporarily eased during the mid-to-late 1970s. Consequently, it cannot be concluded that the US economic situation was the direct cause of Carter's troop withdrawal policy. Instead, historical case studies reveal that a significant motive for Carter's troop withdrawal policy was his own perception of the risks associated with the US military's automatic intervention in the event of North Korean attacks. Such limitations suggest that while the US economic situation and South Korea's burden-sharing efforts do influence changes in the alliance's cohesion, a more complete explanation can be achieved by also taking into account domestic political factors.

Alternative Hypothesis and Model

The leading theories—the external threat, alliance dilemma, and collective action hypotheses—are inadequate in explaining why the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance has changed over time. This is because they focus heavily on a single concept, frequently arguing that alliance cohesion is a derivative of shared threat perceptions and interests. However, in some cases, international factors, such as threats and interests, may become less important while domestic constraints within member countries become more important, leading to changes in both the countries' alliance policy and the alliance's cohesion.[401] Therefore, to develop a more thorough approach to understanding how countries behave toward their allies, both international and

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[401] Christian Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

domestic factors need to be considered. As Robert Putnam famously emphasized, "Domestic politics and international relations are often somehow entangled."[402]

Interplay among International and Domestic Political-Economic Factors

This study considers domestic economic conditions and domestic political support to be key variables affecting alliance cohesion. First, a member country's economic stability and growth can directly impact its ability and willingness to contribute resources to an alliance. Increased investment can strengthen alliance cohesion by demonstrating a country's commitment to its allies and deterring potential adversaries. In addition, it is easier to gain political support for an alliance when the domestic economy is healthy, as the public and political elites are more likely to view international commitments positively when the country is economically stable. By contrast, a struggling economy may force a country to reduce its defense spending and foreign aid budget, which can strain the alliance and undermine its overall effectiveness. Furthermore, when all the members of an alliance are economically strong, such a stable domestic economic situation contributes to equitable burden-sharing among the allied countries because they can more effectively assume their share of the defense responsibilities, fostering a sense of unity and mutual trust. Yet, if one or more member countries face economic challenges, they may struggle to meet their commitments, leading to perceptions of exploitation or free-riding and, ultimately, weakening the alliance cohesion.

Second, the level of domestic political support also significantly affects countries' alliance policy. This is because forming an alliance with another country entails the risk of being drawn into the ally's local conflicts, in addition to economic costs. Thus, the formation of an alliance represents a national decision, particularly in democratic nations wherein a defense alliance cannot be formed unilaterally by an executive branch without domestic political support and consensus. In particular, this study focuses on the importance of congressional attitudes to alliance cohesion in the domestic politics of a democratic country, such as the US. After an alliance has been formed, congressional support is necessary because it has the power to approve budgets, including defense spending and foreign aid. As a result, a positive congressional attitude toward an alliance can result in more substantial financial and military contributions to the partnership, reflecting the country's strong commitment. Conversely, if it is skeptical or unsupportive of the alliance, it may reduce funding or impose restrictions that could strain the alliance cohesion. In addition, a democratic country's congress has the authority to oversee and influence the direction of the country's alliance policy through hearings, investigations, and legislative actions. A supportive congressional attitude can strengthen alliance cohesion by reinforcing the government's policies and commitments. By contrast, a confrontational attitude may create inconsistencies or divisions within the alliance, thereby affecting its cohesion.

Cohesion within Asymmetric Alliances

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[402] Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 427.

Another key question concerns how the theory of alliance cohesion can be applied to asymmetric alliances, as this study's primary aim is to explain the changes seen in the US–South Korea alliance, which has had an asymmetric nature since its inception. This study argues that, in the context of asymmetric relationships, a major power's decisions have more significant impacts on alliance cohesion for two main reasons. First, for minor powers, forming an alliance with a major power is often the only way to ensure their national security. Thus, a minor power seeks to preserve its alliance with a major power as long as its local threats persist or until its own power increases. Conversely, for major powers, forming asymmetric alliances is often a matter of choice, which is commonly driven by the pursuit of strategic interests rather than mere security concerns. Consequently, the existence and continuity of an alliance often hinge on the decisions made by the major power. Second, because major powers wield substantially greater military and economic power than minor ones, the efficacy of a defense alliance typically depends on the extent of the major power's engagement. As a result, the major power's involvement plays a crucial role in determining the alliance's overall effectiveness.[403]

Therefore, to explain the changes that occur in the cohesion of an asymmetric alliance, it is crucial to consider how strategic interests, economic conditions, and domestic political support operate for a major power ally. First, significant strategic interests provide the major power with clear motivation to uphold the alliance due to it directly benefiting from the partnership. Second, favorable economic conditions enable the major power to allocate resources to the alliance without compromising its domestic priorities, leaving it more willing to bear the costs associated with maintaining the alliance. Finally, strong domestic political support ensures that the major power's alliance policy is backed by key national stakeholders, which reduces internal opposition and the likelihood of a sudden policy change.

When a major power has substantial strategic interests in an alliance with a minor power, enjoys favorable economic conditions, and receives strong domestic political support, its risk of entrapment is reduced because these factors collectively create a more favorable environment in

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[403] If a major power has few or no interests in an alliance with a minor power, it is unlikely to make a strong commitment to the alliance. These interests, therefore, determine the level of effort the major power is willing to put into constructing a security guarantee for the minor power. If the major power has strong interests in the alliance, it is more likely to remain committed to the minor power in the event of a crisis. For this reason, the strategic interests of the major power to an alliance are closely linked to the level of alliance cohesion. The greater the strategic interests of the major power, the more likely it is to share common goals and actively coordinate its policies to maintain the cohesion of the alliance. A major power's economic conditions will also significantly influence the major power's commitment and, consequently, the alliance cohesion. When a major power experiences favorable economic conditions, it is more likely to have the necessary resources to invest in the alliance, thus strengthening its commitment. This increased investment can contribute to greater alliance cohesion by demonstrating the major power's dedication to the alliance's objectives and fostering trust between the allies. Conversely, if a major power is facing economic challenges, it might be less willing or able to invest in the alliance, potentially undermining its commitment and weakening the alliance cohesion. Domestic political support also plays a crucial role in determining a major power's commitment to an alliance with a minor power. When there is strong domestic political backing for the alliance, the major power is more likely to honor its commitments and prioritize the partnership, contributing to a stronger, more cohesive alliance. However, if domestic political support is lacking or opposition to the alliance is strong, the major power's government might be unable to allocate much resources to the partnership, putting the alliance cohesion at risk. In such cases, the major power might face pressure to reevaluate or even withdraw from the alliance, potentially weakening the bonds between the allies and undermining the alliance's effectiveness.

which the major power can maintain its commitment to the alliance. In this case, the major power would be more willing to engage in local conflicts to protect its minor power ally, leading to it adopting an engagement-oriented alliance policy. Simultaneously, the minor power's risk of abandonment decreases, as it expects the major power's intervention in the event of contingencies. As a result, the minor power is more likely to pursue an alliance-reliant policy with regard to the major power. By contrast, if the major power has limited strategic interests, faces economic challenges, and lacks domestic political support, its risk of entrapment increases, leading to it adopting a disengagement-oriented alliance policy. In this situation, the minor power's risk of abandonment grows, meaning that it may opt to pursue a self-reliant policy, which could potentially include domestic nuclear weapons development.

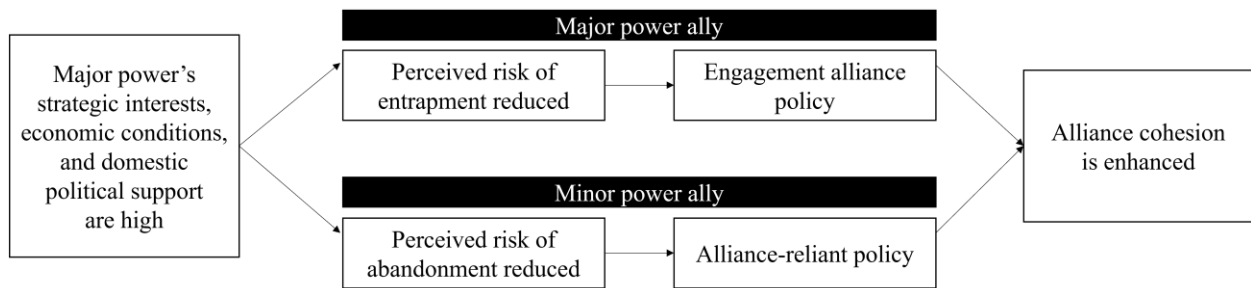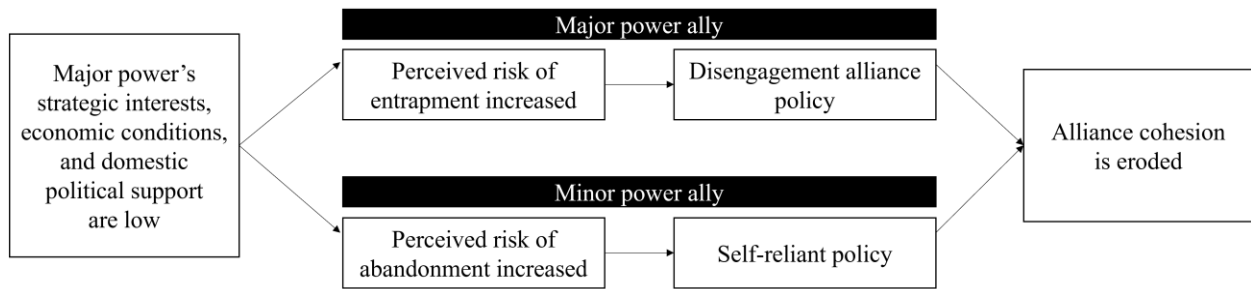Figure 7-1. Path to strong alliance cohesion in the context of an asymmetric alliance

Figure 7-2. Path to weak alliance cohesion in the context of an asymmetric alliance

US–South Korea Alliance Context

Based on the above discussion, this study argues that the changes seen in the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion were the result of the interplay among three key factors: changes in US strategic interests, changes in US economic conditions, and the attitude of the US Congress toward the alliance (domestic political factor). The US–South Korea alliance's asymmetric structure means that changes in the strategic, economic, and political landscape in the US significantly impact the alliance's cohesion, as the US plays a crucial role in safeguarding the Korean Peninsula. Consequently, if the US shifts its alliance policy from one of engagement to one of disengagement based on these factors, South Korea, which relies on the US for its security,

would unavoidably face a heightened risk of abandonment. To counter such a risk, Seoul aimed to transition from an alliance-dependent policy to a self-reliant one. Ultimately, when the US and South Korea opted for disengagement and self-reliance policies, respectively, the alliance's cohesion was weakened; however, if they chose engagement and alliance-reliance policies, respectively, the cohesion would be strengthened.

This framework effectively explains the shifts in the alliance's cohesion over time. For instance, following the 1959 Cuban Revolution, the US prioritized stopping the spread of communism in the Americas and nurturing positive relations with Latin American countries, as instability in the region would directly jeopardize US security. Moreover, due to the outflow of dollars and concerns regarding the balance of payments, the US was unable to maintain its expansive, engagement-oriented alliance policy, which included significant military aid and the stationing of US troops overseas. This led to a policy change, with the US focusing on core strategic areas and preserving its military strength in less critical regions such as the Korean Peninsula. The Vietnam War further underscored the need for this strategic shift. Decision-makers in Washington proposed utilizing some US troops stationed in South Korea as strategic reserves in Southeast Asia. However, the deployment of South Korean combat troops to Vietnam temporarily halted this strategic shift. As the South Korean military could substitute US forces in Vietnam, the US was able to save on deployment costs, rendering the maintenance of amicable relations with South Korea strategically significant.

When President Nixon assumed office in 1969, the US economy continued to decline. The country faced trade deficits, growing unemployment, and rising inflation, making it increasingly challenging to sustain the Bretton Woods system. Consequently, the US risked losing its superpower status. Thus, the US strategic focus shifted from defeating communists in Vietnam to returning its overstretched power to the mainland while minimizing the impact of doing so on its allies. These strategic interests and goals were embodied in the Nixon Doctrine and then implemented through the Vietnamization policy and the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea. The Nixon administration sought to support South Korea's military modernization with the intention of enabling the country to assume its own defense responsibilities. If South Korea's military was capable of handling the initial defense responsibilities, the Korean Peninsula's defense could evolve into a collaborative endeavor in which the US and South Korea shared mission responsibilities. This approach demonstrated the US commitment to South Korea and other allies while reducing its burden and risk of extensive involvement. Yet, the Nixon administration's plan faltered when the US Congress cut the previously substantial foreign aid budgets due to the economic downturn and human rights violations in South Korea. As a consequence, South Korea pursued the development of its own nuclear weapons, leaving the alliance's cohesion more fragile than ever.

After the collapse of South Vietnam in 1975, the US realigned its strategic interests toward countries in the Asian regional alliance. Due to the fall of South Vietnam, Washington saw the restoration of the credibility of the US commitment to its Asian allies as a top priority, as these countries might otherwise opt to pursue independent foreign policies. This was crucial to preventing the breakdown of the US-centric international order and stopping nations such as South Korea from pursuing independent nuclear armament. Thus, the US shifted its alliance policy toward engaging and reassuring its Asian allies. Although President Carter's troop

withdrawal policy challenged this policy shift, it faced significant opposition from Congress, including from Democratic Senator Stratton, who suggested an amendment to retain at least 26,000 US troops in South Korea. Owing to this congressional resistance, the Carter administration halted further troop withdrawals, restoring South Korea's confidence in the US commitment. This led to strengthened US–South Korea alliance cohesion, as marked by the establishment of the CFC, which symbolized the US commitment and military integration. This discussion supports the present study's main argument that strategic interests and political attitudes significantly impact alliance cohesion. In this instance, the change in US strategic interests and congressional opposition to reducing US involvement were both instrumental in enhancing the alliance's cohesion.

In sum, the complex interplay among international and domestic factors shaped the alliance's cohesion during the 1960s and 1970s. The related dynamics are described in Table 6-1 below.

Table 7-1. Dynamic analysis of the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion

	Period 1 (1961–1964)	Period 2 (1965–1968)	Period 3 (1969–1974)	Period 4 (1975–1979)
US strategic interests	–	+	–	+
Economic conditions	–	+	–	+
Political support	–	+	–	+
Effect (alliance cohesion)	**Eroded**	**Enhanced**	**Eroded**	**Enhanced**

Implications and Significance

The introduction to this study questioned how political-economic factors had influenced the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion over time, as demonstrated through case studies during the 1960s and 1970s. I argue that the changes in the US's strategic interests and economic situation, as well as the attitude of the US Congress influenced both the US and South Korea's alliance policies. As a result, when the US strategic interests were focused on the Korean Peninsula, US policy concerning Korea was economically supported, and when Congress supported its Korea policy, the US pursued an engagement policy toward Korea while South Korea pursued an alliance-reliant policy. This resulted in the improved cohesion of the alliance due to the level of US troops stationed in Korea, US assistance provided to South Korea, and deeper strategic consultation and military integration. Yet, when US strategic interests lay elsewhere, its foreign policy was subject to economic constraints and Congress exhibited a negative attitude toward supporting South Korea, meaning that the US pursued a disengagement policy toward Korea and South Korea pursued a self-reliant policy, resulting in the erosion of alliance cohesion. These three driving factors did not always have the same level of salience. Indeed, in some cases, strategic interests and economic situations were significant factors in relation to the US–South

Korea alliance's cohesion, while in other cases, the attitude of Congress was a critical factor. Still, it is undoubtedly true that these three factors were the key considerations when assessing the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance.

This discussion has both academic and policy significance. Prior research on the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance has primarily focused on the changes in US strategic interests.[404] This has involved analyzing the impacts of international events, such as the Sino-Soviet split and the Vietnam War, on the US–South Korea alliance from a US grand strategic perspective. However, this research approach has limitations when it comes to explaining why the US wanted to withdraw its troops from South Korea in the early 1960s and why US military aid was not properly delivered after the 1971 agreement. Furthermore, this approach has only limited usefulness in terms of explaining the failure of Carter's troop withdrawal policy and the restoration of the alliance's cohesion, as these developments occurred in the absence of salient external events.

Other studies have sought to explain the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance in relation to domestic political factors, such as the relationship between South Korean Presidents and US presidents, and governmental changes between conservatives and liberals.[405] However, such studies also have limitations in providing consistent explanations over time. This is because the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion changed regardless of the political affiliations and ideologies of the US presidents, who came from both the Democratic and Republican parties during the period in question. Therefore, the political-economic approach used in this study provides a more powerful explanation of the changes in the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance. It also enables more accurate predictions of future situations.

From a policy perspective, this discussion is also significant. Alliance cohesion is not only concerned with the intimacy among allied countries, as it also serves as a measure for predicting whether an alliance will actually work. In other words, high cohesion within an alliance means that more effective deterrence can be achieved. A country involved in a highly cohesive alliance is more likely to receive support from its allies in the event of a conflict, which implies that an attacker would have to endure greater losses. As a consequence, the likelihood of aggressive behavior by adversaries decreases.

Today, discussions concerning how to deter North Korea's nuclear threats are mainly focused on military aspects. For example, the possibility of deploying US strategic assets more frequently or conducting joint military exercises is mainly discussed as a means of enhancing deterrence.

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[404] See Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945–1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Terence Roehrig, *From Deterrence to Engagement: The US Defense Commitment to South Korea* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006); Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).
[405] For example, Jae Jeok Park and Sang Bok Moon, "Perception of Order as a Source of Alliance Cohesion," *The Pacific Review* 27, no. 2 (2014): 147-168; Hoon Kak Chang, "President Rhee Syngman and ROK-US Alliance: On the Cause of Forming an Alliance between ROK and US [이승만 대통령과 한미동맹]," Social Science Research 42, no. 1 (2011): 131-163; Inseok Yoo, "Park Chung-hee's 'Role Conception' and the Conflict within the ROK-US Alliance [박정희 대통령의 역할인식과 한미동맹의 갈등]," Defense Studies 64, no.3 (2021): 1-25; Moon Suk Ahn, "The Moon Jae-In Government and Korea-U.S. Alliance: A Review of Alliance Durability [문재인 정부와 한미동맹]," Journal of East Asian Studies 23, no. 4 (2018): 65-83.

However, this study argues that the cohesion of the alliance also plays a critical role in determining the effectiveness of deterrence. This cohesion is influenced by strategic interests, economic situations, and domestic political support. Thus, long-term political and economic efforts are necessary to strengthen deterrence. In the context of the US–South Korea alliance, this includes retaining South Korea as an important strategic partner of the US, creating synergies between the two countries' economies, and conducting public diplomacy in an effort to foster domestic support for South Korea within the US.

Future Research

It must be acknowledged that this study does not fully explain the dynamics related to the US–South Korea alliance's cohesion. Another reason why the US–South Korea alliance has been able to maintain its robustness for over 70 years is the fact the US and South Korea share values. In particular, South Korea's participation in democratization and globalization since the 1980s has served as an opportunity for it to become a value-sharing ally of the US. This development stands in stark contrast to the human rights violations seen in South Korea during the 1970s, which generated strong political opposition within Washington politics. Therefore, future research should explore the process by which the US–South Korea alliance developed into a value-sharing alliance during the 1980s and 1990s, which was not covered in the present study. In particular, analyzing how South Korea's participation in democratization and globalization during these periods influenced the sustainability of the US–South Korea alliance even after the end of the Cold War would be a significant academic and policy-related research topic.

The other limitation of this study is that it does not delve deeply into how changes in South Korea's domestic political and economic situation affected the alliance's cohesion. Of course, during the 1960s and 1970s, when North Korea had a more powerful military than South Korea, Seoul's alliance policy was dominated by the security logic. This means that the economic or political situation during that time could not have become sufficiently significant to change South Korea's policy toward the alliance. However, the situation has been different since the 2000s. South Korea now has enough economic power to defend itself, and there were cases where the presence of US forces in South Korea sometimes represented a domestic political burden for Seoul. Thus, South Korea sought to adjust its alliance with the US, as seen in cases such as the transfer of operational control or the debate over the withdrawal of US troops. This study does not discuss how South Korea's economic and political factors influenced the alliance's cohesion. However, to fully understand the dynamics of alliance cohesion, it is also important to take South Korea's economic power and domestic political factors into account. Therefore, this is suggested as a valuable future research topic.

Finally, I hope that this study's analysis of the cohesion of the US–South Korea alliance will make a meaningful contribution to both academic and policy-related research concerning South Korean security issues and the US–South Korea alliance. I also hope that the discussions featured in this study will lay the groundwork for a deeper understanding of alliance dynamics in the future and contribute to both peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

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