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**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**  
**Monterey, California**



**THESIS**

**EXPANDING THE ROK NAVY: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE  
U.S.- ROK ALLIANCE**

by

John M. Pethel

June 2001

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

E. A. Olsen  
H. L. Miller

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ALLIANCE**

John M. Pethel  
Lieutenant, United States Navy  
B.S., University of La Verne, 1995

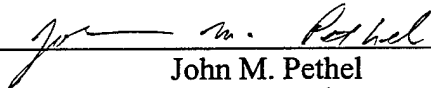
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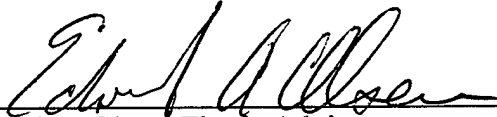
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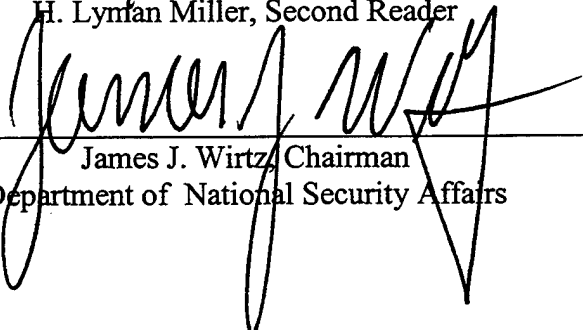
Author:

  
John M. Pethel

Approved by:

  
Edward A. Olsen, Thesis Advisor

  
H. Lyman Miller, Second Reader

  
James J. Wirtz, Chairman  
Department of National Security Affairs

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## ABSTRACT

Stability on the Korean peninsula has been a goal of several countries. The Republic of Korea (ROK) depends on the United States to maintain stability on the Korean peninsula, but realizes greater independence from its long time ally may soon be inevitable, especially in the midst of a difficult reunification. Measures are required now to afford the ROK every opportunity to provide for its own security and stability, including the need to modernize the ROK Navy (ROKN).

Present and future South Korean naval commitments for the regional and international maritime environment support the ROKN to transition from a brown water navy to a blue water navy capable of meeting future challenges. The ROK must grasp the concept of naval modernization to achieve a naval force capable of projecting power, carrying out its strategic objectives, and ultimately guaranteeing vital defense for its sea lanes of communication (SLOCs). Advances in technology demand prudence on the part of ROK officials, as short and long-term goals affecting South Korea's security and stability are planned, ordered, and executed.

The ROK Navy is becoming a highly trained force capable of neutralizing potential opponents. Modern systems and improved training generated a talented field of professional warriors. ROK naval modernization is greater than many assume it to be, but only the South Korean political process can determine how it will proceed.

The Korean peninsula has a vibrant maritime history. Bordering on the East Sea and the West Sea dictates the need for a maritime force. Modern invaders can infiltrate the Korean peninsula vis-à-vis land, sea, or air. The onus rests on South Korean leaders to

protect their borders, including sea-lanes of communications. The lifeblood of the South Korean economy is its shipping industry. Protecting these valuable sea-lanes of communications, in a technologically advanced era, challenges South Korean leaders to make some important decisions. The ROKN cannot compete against large modern navies, which are capable of (1) conducting sustained naval operations, and (2) maintaining multi-tasked naval platforms.

An issue the ROKN must consider is whether or not to develop its capabilities to conduct sustained blue-water naval operations. The ROKN's opportunity is ripe to expand its existing force into a modern blue water navy, looking several decades into the future.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis examines the implications for the U.S. – Republic of Korea (ROK) alliance if the ROK modernizes and expands its navy. Certainly the relationship between the two countries developed into a mutual friendship which affects security and stability on the Korean peninsula. Once ties were established after WWII, the United States filled the role of protector for a newly divided country and exported a U.S. version of political, social, and economic ideas to South Korea. The two Korean countries adopted contrasting ideologies and orientations toward each other, culminating in the North Korean invasion of South Korea in the summer of 1950. After the Korean War, the Republic of Korea remained dependent on the United States to rebuild its devastated country.

Since the Korean War, the United States and the Republic of Korea have nurtured this relationship which has been responsible for great success in the ROK. Specifically, the ROK is a democratic country with a free market economy. Economic successes of the ROK have provided large-scale financial support to the infrastructure of the ROK's national programs, especially its military. The national budget for the ROK military has generally favored the ROK Army, because the opposing North Korean Army was camped across the Demilitarized Zone. While ROK military branches have stood vigilant watch for nearly five decades, the ROK Navy has fallen behind its Northeast Asian counterpart's naval programs. Friendly ties forged with the United States have resulted in the allocation of U.S. naval forces to provide maritime protection for the Republic of Korea's national interests.

This thesis compares naval forces of the Republic of Korea (ROK/South Korea), and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK/North Korea). The emphasis of both navies to rely on coastal naval forces reinforces the main thesis, which states the ROK is long overdue to expand its naval forces, which if done properly, could provide greater protection for its national maritime interests. No country should rely on another country to protect its national interests, and the ROK has done so for more than five decades.

Although the ROK has undertaken some programs, it has yet to commit to a modernization program that would give it capabilities to project limited power and enhance its national interests. The relative calm in Northeast Asia provides the ROK with an opportunity to examine the implications of not taking advantage of this period. In addition, uncertain future implications for the U.S.-ROK alliance should not interfere with the ROK's decision to restructure its naval forces into a more independent role.



# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. OVERVIEW

The Korean peninsula, steeped in Confucian tradition, is one of the Far East's strategic fulcrums. Chinese and Japanese empires used Korea as a battleground in past centuries. Still in a state of war from the Korean War, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) maintain large standing armies poised to counteract each other. Extending south from the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Russia, the Korean peninsula shares water boundaries with the East Sea (Sea of Japan) and the West Sea (Yellow Sea).

Remnants of the Korean War, especially the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), exist while the Korean peninsula remains divided. Armies of extraordinary size and capabilities are present on the peninsula, making it one of the world's hotspots. Numerous post-Korean War lessons have been learned, including the ROK's recognition of the strategic value and importance of maintaining a maritime force capable of defending the Korean peninsula and its national objectives. The ROK Navy, regarded by many as a brown water navy limited previously to conducting operations against its northern brothers and only then a few miles offshore, is the key to the future of the ROK's security. ROK naval planners have identified ROK Navy areas of deficiency and must undertake a naval modernization program or the ROK's security may be jeopardized. The ROK's short-term naval threat is the DPRK, and new visions of South Korean security require a bold change in the role of the ROKN. Disrupting trade routes is a serious threat to the future security of a country frequently described as a minnow swimming among whales.

Stability on the Korean peninsula has been a goal of several countries. The ROK has depended on the United States to maintain stability on the peninsula and must realize greater independence from its long time ally may be inevitable, especially in the midst of a difficult reunification. Measures are required now to afford the ROK every opportunity to provide for its own security and stability, including the need for modernizing the ROKN.

This thesis suggests it is time for the ROK to expand its naval forces, consistent with a growing desire for the ROK to become more self-sufficient. Specific questions concerning a ROKN expansion project include:

- What regional and international maritime implications can be expected vis-à-vis an expanding ROKN?
- What bearing on the U.S.-ROK alliance will an expansion program produce?
- How will a larger ROKN affect stability on the Korean peninsula?

In light of a divided Korea, how will an expanded ROKN influence a future reunified Korea?

## **B. PLAN OF THE THESIS**

Chapter II examines Korean naval history and demonstrates the maritime environment's important contributions to the Korean peninsula. Security on the Korean peninsula has been a byproduct of a naval force. A chronology of naval experiences will demonstrate its impact on national security. Korean history shows the importance of having a maritime force capable of protecting national interests. The ROK must expand its maritime force to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century maritime environment.

Chapter III examines the Republic of Korea's post-Cold War strategic situation including its relations with the United States, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,

the People's Republic of China (PRC), Japan, Russia, and multilateral organizations. These bilateral arrangements helped shape South Korean politics and contributed to stability on the Korean peninsula while limiting the need for the Republic of Korea to expand its maritime force. Despite many successes of these bilateral relationships, the ROK depended on the United States. However, the U.S.-ROK relationship is partly responsible for the limited roles the ROKN currently assumes. The ROK counted on the United States to protect the Korean peninsula, guaranteeing stability vis-à-vis military and diplomatic channels. A reexamination of previous U.S.-ROK arrangements to determine the course of action concerning ROK security is required.

Chapter IV provides a review and analysis of the ROK and the DPRK naval (DPRKN) force structure including capabilities, limitations, threats, operational plans, and exercises. The DPRKN data is included for comparative purposes. South Korean naval commitments for the regional and international maritime environment support the ROKN to transition from a brown water navy to a blue water navy capable of meeting future challenges. The ROK must grasp the concept of naval modernization to ensure future strategic objectives are met.

Chapter V outlines U.S.-ROK maritime components from a historical perspective. Addressing a range of issues, including a possible arms race in Northeast Asia and Korean peninsula security, this chapter outlines repercussions to this alliance under a ROKN expansion program. Change will occur but to what degree? The U.S. Navy has provided equipment and training to the ROKN, which although adapted to suit the needs of the smaller navy, cannot propel the ROKN into the role of a formidable naval power in Northeast Asia. Advanced ship class designs outfitted with highly technical combat

systems and capabilities will provide the ROKN with many answers to their expansion question but will the byproduct jeopardize the U.S.- ROK alliance?

Chapter VI outlines several roles for the ROKN if the Korean peninsula were to unify. Peace and stability are common denominators in an expansive ROKN architecture. The ROKN's difficult task will be convincing regional powers and the international community the purposes of an expansion of naval forces. With reunification uncertain, the ROK navy must now take measures to prepare itself for the inevitable monumental task which may lead the Korean peninsula to its full naval potential. Several courses of action are assessed to address integration of the two Korean navies if unification occurs.

Chapter VII will offer some concluding observations.

## II. KOREAN NAVAL HISTORY

### A. PRE-ROK NAVAL EXPERIENCES

Northern expansionists and invaders frequently threatened Korea's national security. Whether they were Chinese, Mongol, or Manchurian tribes invading Korea, Korean rulers devoted more attention to these invaders on their northern borders than threats on their southern coast. Korea's location attracted invaders.

During the first century BC, the southeast area of the Korean peninsula consisted of a federation of several tribes. One of the smallest tribes, Kaya, found friends in the Paekche Kingdom to the west, and had constant conflict with the larger Silla Kingdom. Kaya sought to expand and built large ships to satisfy this endeavor. According to Kenneth Lee, "Archaeological findings of ancient ships unearthed in Kaya, Southern Silla, and northern Kyushu of Japan, resemble the Viking ships of Europe in size and shape. Using these ships, the Kaya established settlements on the Japanese islands of Tsushima, northern Kyushu, and the southern tip of Honshu."<sup>1</sup>

Chinese empires and the Korean kingdoms employed land forces as well as maritime forces in their wars. In the second war between T'ang China and the Three Kingdoms of Korea, forces transported across water played important and critical roles. In 660 AD, Paekche, the weakest Korean kingdom, became the target for T'ang China and the Silla Kingdom. Kenneth Lee states "T'ang Kao-tsung sent 130,000 troops over the Yellow Sea and landed them on the western coast of Paekche, while 50,000 Silla

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<sup>1</sup> Lee, Kenneth B., *Korea and East Asia: The Story of a Phoenix*, Praeger Publishers, 1997, page 14.

forces crossed the Paekche border from the east.”<sup>2</sup> Water transport allowed troops to strategically land at important locations and strike enemy’s center of gravity. Paekche was stricken by its 6<sup>th</sup> century invaders and never recovered.

During the 1590’s, Japan’s Hideyoshi aspired to conquer China with Korean assistance. Hideyoshi’s letter to the Korean King, according to Weems declared, “I will make a leap, land in China, and lay my laws upon her. I shall go by way of Korea and if your soldiers will join me in this invasion, you will have shown your neighborly spirit. I am determined that my name shall pervade the three Kingdoms.”<sup>3</sup>

Korea rejected Hideyoshi’s invitation to form an alliance against China. A Japanese invasion of Korea from the sea was expected by the Korean court. The Korean King ordered preparations to strengthen his coasts and appointed Yi Sun-shin admiral of all the Korean naval forces.

Hideyoshi’s invading forces were enormous. According to Weems, “the best Japanese accounts make the total 250,000 while the Korean records say 241,500.”<sup>4</sup> Japan’s army utilized firearms on Korean garrisons likened to the destruction Cortez subjected to the ancient Mexican empire. Korea fell behind Japan’s military superiority; Korea was an easy prey for the invading Japanese.

Japan crushed the Korean spirit as its march to Seoul proved Korea was unable to stop the dominating Japanese military onslaught. When the Japanese achieved a victory,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, page 17.

<sup>3</sup> Weems, Clarence N., *Hulbert’s History of Korea*, Volume I, Hillary House Publishers LTD, New York, 1962, page 347.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, page 350.

they would rest, take up stations at garrisons and cities captured rather than continuing to China. These Japanese miscalculations provided Korea the time to regroup, resist, and fight back. When discussions to abolish the Korean naval fleets developed, Admiral Yi believed a naval force was the best deterrent to prevent further Japanese invasions. His opinion was that neither the Korean army nor the Korean navy should be abolished.<sup>5</sup>

Japan's army advanced across the Korean peninsula with a limited amount of supplies and relied on foraging. Japanese ships, loaded with crucial supplies and personnel reinforcements, provided Korea with a strategic opportunity. A fleet of Japanese boats, with men and supplies, anchored off one of the Korean islands. The admiral responsible for the Kyung-sang Province saw the advancing Japanese fleet and sought the assistance of Yi Sun-shin. Koreans assembled a small fleet to oppose the Japanese boats, and sailed to meet the hostile Japanese fleet. Admiral Yi Sun-shin had the wind at his back and shot arrows at the Japanese ships, engulfing twenty-six of them in flames.<sup>6</sup>

Admiral Yi Sun-shin conducted a series of operations in the South Sea, destroying many Japanese ships. The centerpiece of his force was the ironclad Kobukson (turtle ships), which Admiral Yi had plated with armor to protect his sailors and marines.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Park, Yune-Hee, *Admiral Yi Sun-Shin and His Turtleboat Armada*, The Hanjin Publishing Company, Seoul, Korea, 1978, page 71.

<sup>6</sup> Weems, Clarence N., *Hulbert's History of Korea*, Volume I, Hillary House Publishers LTD, New York, 1962, page 375.

<sup>7</sup> The Korean Overseas Culture and Information Service, *A Handbook of Korea*, 1998, page 69.

Admiral Yi Sun-shin's naval forces negated Japan's ability to re-supply their army. Korean naval superiority provided freedom of the seas, which strangled Japan's war fighting capabilities. According to Eckert, "Admiral Yi's successes gave complete control of the sea lanes to the Korean forces, with three important results: the Japanese were unable to move north by sea and effect a link with their land armies; Japanese supply routes were cut; and the grain-rich region of Cholla province remained safely in Korea's hands."<sup>8</sup>

Korean developments made naval history. The first was the ironclad battleship, and the second was a battle formation. The battle formation, known as the crane formation due to the similar shape and size of a crane in flight, was designed so the main body of the attack force was aimed at the center of the enemy fleet. This tactic enabled the Korean naval forces to punch through the enemy line and scatter the enemy.<sup>9</sup>

Japan launched another unsuccessful campaign in 1597 and, again, Admiral Yi's ships denied Japan a naval victory. Ironically, the Japanese mortally wounded Admiral Yi as Korean forces were expelling Japanese forces off the Korean peninsula. Korea lost a naval hero but remained loyal to its seclusion policy.

According to Roger Tennant, "Nineteenth-century western maps of Korea show a coastline littered with names of European princes, politicians and seamen, evidence that,

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<sup>8</sup> Eckert, C.J., et al, *Korea Old and New: A History*, Korea Institute, 1990, page 146.

<sup>9</sup> Lee, K.B., *Korea and East Asia: The Story of a Phoenix*, Praeger Publishers, 1997, page 101.



largely unknown to its inhabitants, had been charting its waters: the Great powers were sizing-up their prey.”<sup>10</sup>

Western nations, eager to conduct trade with Korea, sent ships to establish contact. English ships appeared off the coast in 1832. Later, in 1846, several French warships anchored off the Korean coast. In 1854, two Russian vessels sailed along the Hamgyong coast, causing some deaths, and injuries among the Koreans they encountered. In August 1866, an American trading ship, the General Sherman, sailed up the Taedong River to P’yongyang, only to be set afire by a mob of local residents and soldiers, killing all twenty-four crewmen on board.<sup>11</sup>

The destruction of the General Sherman demonstrated Korea’s attempt to remain isolated. The ship’s captain ignored the warning issued by the Taewongun and under a flood tide, proceeded to sail to the city walls. When the tide receded, the General Sherman was stuck on a shoal. According to Tennant, “The Taewongun sent orders that it was to depart at once or be destroyed. The official who had been acting as intermediary was seized as a hostage by the frightened crew and shots were exchanged. The ship’s powerful guns and the crew’s modern rifles terrified the townspeople and kept their attackers at bay for several days, and a number of people being killed.”<sup>12</sup>

Trading with Korea under the threat of using armed force prompted Korea to close her doors, fall deeper into a policy of seclusion, and persecute Catholics deemed

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<sup>10</sup> Tennant, Roger, *A History of Korea*, Kegan Paul International, London and New York, 1996, page 198.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, page 194.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, page 204.

responsible for Korea's problems. Catholic persecution caused the French Disturbance in 1866, initiated by a French missionary who escaped persecution and later persuaded the French Asiatic Squadron to take punitive measures against Korea. The French Admiral entered Korean waters in October 1866 with a flotilla of 7 warships and seized the administration center of Kanghwa Island.<sup>13</sup> Eventually the French Squadron was overwhelmed, unable to complete its mission and retreated.

Korea's 1866 destruction of the U.S. ship General Sherman forced the United States to resort to gunboat diplomacy. Five warships from the U.S. Asiatic Squadron sailed from Chinese bases into Korean waters. Korea answered the approaching vessels with shore batteries. According to Eckert, "It became apparent that the Korean government would not yield to a show of force. Accordingly, the U.S. fleet withdrew and returned to its stations in China."<sup>14</sup>

Korean neighbors were insistent upon conducting trade and, like western powers, resorted to armed force to accomplish their objectives. Korean leaders resisted Japan and refused to accept the credentials of the envoys they sent in 1870, as they were not presented in the traditional way. The Japanese returned in 1872 in two British-built warships, but were not allowed to proceed to Seoul. After a long wait, the Japanese returned to their home waters frustrated.<sup>15</sup>

Japan was determined to establish ties with Korea. According to Tennant, "When a further request for trade was rebuffed in 1875, the Japanese decided to do what the

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<sup>13</sup> Eckert, page 195.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, page 197.

<sup>15</sup> Tennant, page 207.

Americans had done to them, they sent warships, one of which landed troops and bombarded a fort on Kanghwa, and on the way home they also made an attack on the harbor at Pusan, after which they issued a report that accused the Koreans of firing on peaceful ships.”<sup>16</sup>

Japan’s accusations resulted in the Treaty of Kanghwa, Korea’s first treaty signed in February 1876, which forced the opening of Korea. Korea slipped from China’s suzerainty, exploited first by Japan while others followed. Challenging former Sino-Korean relationships, Japan raised the bar in Korea. China sought to restore their position in Korea, undermined by armed Japanese. Russia decided their influence in Korea was required and built inroads to satisfy that endeavor.

Chinese and Japanese troops in Korea lead to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in 1894. According to Eckert, “The Sino-Japanese war began with Japan’s sudden seizure of the royal residence, Kyongbok Palace, on July 23, 1894. Japanese troops then engaged Chinese forces in a series of land and naval battles in and around Korea from late July, scoring impressive victories at Pyongyang and in a naval battle on the Yellow Sea in mid-September. The war ended in total Japanese victory on April 17, 1895, with the conclusion of a peace treaty at Shimonoseki.”<sup>17</sup>

China acquiesced to Japan and acknowledged Korea’s full independence from China as Japan firmly dictated policy to Korea. Japan’s policies extended across Korea and into Manchuria. Russia, equally interested in Manchuria, entered into negotiations with Japan over Manchuria. Japan resorted to a surprise attack on the Russian installation

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, page 208.

<sup>17</sup> Eckert, page 223.

at Port Arthur, culminating in the Russo-Japanese war. Japan soundly defeated Russia. The Treaty of Portsmouth outlined international recognition of Japan's supremacy in Korea, legitimately allowing Japan to colonize Korea.

Korean experiences during 1900 to 1945 began with harsh Japanese rule and ended with involvement in the Second World War. Japan's war machine was stretched thin and resorted to mass conscription of Koreans. Many Koreans volunteered in the Japanese army and navy, but Japan's defeat in World War II provided Koreans with false-illusions of independence. Korea would not experience independence as the United States and Russia had other goals for the Korean peninsula. According to Bruce Cumings, "In the days just before Koreans heard the voice of Emperor Hirohito for the first time, broadcasting Japan's surrender and Korea's liberation on August 15, 1945, John J. McCloy of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) directed two young Colonels, Dean Rusk and Charles H. Bonesteel, to withdraw to an adjoining room and find a place to divide Korea."<sup>18</sup>

Dividing Korea created more than a fracture of the Korean peninsula. Designed to provide a tutelage period for no more than five years, the United States and the Soviet Union quickly designed de facto policies, challenging every prospect of a unified provisional government in Korea. Koreans did not experience independence, instead they were confronted with territorial division. The United States and the Soviet Union, whose decisive WWII roles defeated the Japanese forces, separately occupied the territories

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<sup>18</sup> Cumings, Bruce, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 1997, page 187.

south and north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in Korea for the purpose of disarming the Japanese Army.<sup>19</sup>

August 15, 1948, marks the creation of the Republic of Korea, south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Syngman Rhee was elected President, with a western-style constitution that mixed parliamentary and presidential forms. North Korea's communist election resulted in the proclamation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea the following month, headed by Kim Il Sung under a Soviet-style constitution. North Korea and South Korea did not recognize one another, and both claimed exclusive sovereignty over all of Korea.<sup>20</sup>

Captain George McCabe, United States Coast Guard, dispatched a small contingency to organize and train a South Korean Coast Guard per United States Army's request. CAPT McCabe arrived late August 1946 in the ROK, met his ROK counterpart LCDR Sohn Won Yi, and established the Chinhae Naval Officer Candidate School.<sup>21</sup> The U.S. Coast Guard provided essential support to the ROK while training their maritime forces. The U.S. Coast Guard's primary missions in Korea during the Korean War included maintaining port security, conducting maritime and safety inspections, search and rescue, and ocean patrols.

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<sup>19</sup> Radio Korea International: History of Korea, "The Development of the Republic of Korea and Modern Culture", [http://rki.kbs.co.kr/english/history/hok\\_s91.html](http://rki.kbs.co.kr/english/history/hok_s91.html)

<sup>20</sup> MacDonald, Donald Stone, *The Koreans: Contemporary Politics and Society*, Westview Press, 1990, page 47.

<sup>21</sup> Winkler, David, *The Birth of the South Korean Navy*, Navy League of the United States; [www.navyleague.org/seapower/august2000/historic.htm](http://www.navyleague.org/seapower/august2000/historic.htm)

## **B. 1948-KOREAN WAR**

Korea was divided into (a), the DPRK, north of the thirty-eighth parallel; and (b) the ROK, south of the thirty-eighth parallel. The Korean peninsula created a power vacuum pitting the DPRK against the ROK. These two conflicting countries collided with increased nationalism, leading to the Korean War.

During 1948, DPRK and ROK naval assets were extremely limited. When U.S. occupation forces withdrew from the Republic of Korea in July 1949, 79 vessels, mainly U.S. Navy types: Yard Minesweepers, Landing Craft Infantry, and Picket Boats were transferred to the Korean Security Forces.<sup>22</sup>

U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson's National Press Club speech in January 1950 reaffirmed existing U.S. policy on defense of the Pacific area, but interpreted as a signal that Korea would not be defended by the United States.<sup>23</sup>

When the DPRK's army swept into South Korea, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution ordering the communists to withdraw to the thirty-eighth parallel and actively encouraged fellow U.N. member nations to support South Korea. U.S. troops flowed into South Korea followed by troops from Britain, France, Canada, Australia, the Philippines, and Turkey.

The Korean War saw South Korea's use of naval force. According to Han Woo-Keun, "Under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, the UN coalition took the

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<sup>22</sup> *Jane's Fighting Ships, 1954-55*, Jane's Fighting Ships Publishing Company, 1955, page 255.

<sup>23</sup> MacDonald, Donald Stone, *The Koreans: Contemporary Politics and Society*, Westview Press, 1990, page 50.

initiative, and after the surprise landing at Inch'on, pushed the communists out of South Korea, advancing into the north."<sup>24</sup>

The Inch'on landing demonstrated the strategic value of naval capabilities and assets. On September 15, 1950, Task Force Seven, with more than 320 warships including four aircraft carriers, carried 70,000 troops of X Corps into the dangerous tides of Inch'on harbor. Under heavy naval bombardment and a blanket of fighting aircraft, elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division landed 100 miles behind North Korean lines and took Seoul by September 25, 1950. <sup>25</sup>

North Korea was strangling the South Korean coalition forces before the Inch'on landing. If North Korea had a naval force capable of providing support to its ground troops the outcome of the Korean War could have been different. The U.S. Navy, strategically used during the Korean War, altered the course and outcome of the Korean War.

Indigenous South Korean naval vessels were sparse. One of the ROK's first naval vessels was the patrol craft Bak Du San. A former U.S. Merchant Marine Academy training ship, she was acquired by the South Korean Navy in September 1949 at a cost of \$18,000 and fitted with guns at Pearl Harbor January 1950. Three converted patrol craft

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<sup>24</sup> Han, Woo-Keun, *The History of Korea*, East-West Center Press, Honolulu, 1971, page 506.

<sup>25</sup> Kortegaard, B.L. "Inchon: Operation CHROMITE", Available at <http://www.kmike.com/inchon.htm>

boats for the South Korean Navy were also berthed at Honolulu on the outbreak of war in Korea.<sup>26</sup>

The ROK planned to establish a navy and funded the purchase of ships and training. Untimely events, namely the Korean War, coincided with the naval buildup in South Korea, and rendered the ROK Navy virtually useless. According to Jane's Fighting Ships, "About thirty other ships were acquired before hostilities, including a few ex-U.S. minesweepers, a flotilla of ten former Japanese minelayers, and some picket boats. At the time of the outbreak of the Korean War, the Commander-in-Chief was Admiral Sohn Won Yil and the Navy headquarters were at Seoul."<sup>27</sup>

### **C. POST KOREAN WAR-PRESENT**

ROK naval forces emerged at the end of the Korean War. South Korea assumed all responsibility for its sea defense on March 5, 1955. The United States Far East Naval Command relinquished coastal defense, blockade, convoy escort, and patrol duties to the Republic of Korea Navy.<sup>28</sup> The fledgling ROK Navy, outfitted with decommissioned U.S. and Japanese warships, was initially authorized 15,000 personnel.<sup>29</sup> As of May 2001, the ROK Navy has doubled its personnel size in the hopes of establishing a stand-alone credible defense program.

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<sup>26</sup> *Jane's Fighting Ships, 1950-51*, The McGraw Hill Book Company, 1951, page 262.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, page 262.

<sup>28</sup> *Jane's Fighting Ships, 1955-56*, Jane's Fighting Ships Publishing Company, 1956, page 257.

<sup>29</sup> *Jane's Fighting Ships 2000-2001*, edited by Captain Richard Sharpe, RN, One Hundred and Third Edition, Jane's Information Group Limited, Sentinel House, 2000, page 406.



Despite the Armistice Agreement, the ROK kept up its guard against the DPRK, and designed its military strategy to deter their northern neighbors. A perceived threat from North Korea propelled the ROK into action, officially toward self-sufficiency. Admiral Son Won II, ROK Defense Minister, and the ROK Chief of Naval Operations, Vice Admiral Jeung Kuk-Mo, charted the ROK Navy's course. The ROKN was equipped with 2 ex-U.S. Bostwick destroyer escorts, 4 ex-U.S. frigates, 4 ex-U.S. escort vessels, 12 ex-U.S. patrol vessels, 13 ex-U.S. coastal minesweepers, 3 ex-U.S. motor torpedo boats, 2 ex-Japanese auxiliary minelayers, and 3 ex-Japanese gunboats. In 1955, ROK Naval planning boards stated a goal to include 76 ships in its augmentation program.<sup>30</sup>

North Korea's armed forces expansion continued throughout the 1960s, while South Korean President Syngman Rhee's government depended on the United States for defense and training. In 1963, newly elected South Korean President Park Chung Hee directed efforts to manipulate South Korea's institutions to solve their national problems. The ROK continued to pursue its goals of modernization and national security in the 1960s, and became aware of the importance of political stability.<sup>31</sup>

President Park launched South Korean awareness toward required institutional change in the Yushin Reforms. According to President Park, "The reforms enabled us to

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<sup>30</sup> *Jane's Fighting Ships, 1957-1958*, Jane's Fighting Ships Publishing Company, 1957, page 264.

<sup>31</sup> Park Chung Hee, *Korea Reborn: A Model for Development*, Prentice-Hall Inc, 1979, page 47.

react actively to the changing international environment so that we could ensure our survival and preserve our affluence.”<sup>32</sup>

Several reforms, most notably a modernization program for the ROK armed forces, with one third of all government expenditures dedicated to defense in 1965, instilled confidence in the South Korean government. The Defense Industry Bureau within the Ministry of Defense was established, and weapon assembly at state-owned plants began as the ROK’s naval shipbuilding industry started building warships under the Force Improvement Plan.

Threatened by the communists in North Korea, who could unleash another war on the South Koreans, fuelled a South Korean interest to build up the South Korean defense program. Strengthening its forces became a top priority for South Korea. The ROKN, operating with outdated platforms and systems, benefited from the modernization program. In the 1980s, the ROK modernization program flourished with several new classes of indigenously constructed diesel electric submarines, frigates, fast attack craft, and patrol boats.<sup>33</sup>

Infrastructure changes were required to allow the ROKN to operate with its international counterparts. In 1986, the ROKN reorganized into three fleets. Changes introduced in 1987 within the ROKN recognized the ROK Marines as an independent service component, no longer an extension of the ROKN. Military preparedness is one of the Republic of Korea’s defense objectives. Each branch of the ROK military performs

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, page 14.

<sup>33</sup> Foxwell, David, “Fleet Review: South Korea’s Naval Forces Still Look North”, *Jane’s Navy International*, Sept. 1, 1998, Vol. 103, Issue 7, page 29.

independently and the ROK Army played the leading role for the majority of the ROK's existence.

The ROKN played second fiddle, along with the ROK Air Force, to the ROK Army for many years. The divergence in military spending may soon change, as the ROK government appears to understand the importance and fragility of the ROK's maritime environment, resources, challenges, and responsibilities. An official navy publication sees four main roles for the ROKN as:

- Deterring war through sea power;
- Securing victory in war through sea control;
- Promoting and protecting national interests by protecting resources; and
- Enhancing national prestige through naval presence.<sup>34</sup>

The ROKN is becoming a highly trained force capable of neutralizing its opponent. Modern systems and an improved training syllabus have generated a talented field of professional warriors. The potential for ROKN modernization is greater than many assume it to be, but the South Korean political process will decide how the program will proceed.

Short-term tasks for the ROKN include:

- Destruction of DPRK forces' infiltration/landing attempts;
- Prevention and/or clearance of harbor mining; and
- Defeat of the North Korean People's Navy in port and at sea.<sup>35</sup>

Extending their military presence has been a concern for ROKN officials. In September 1994, a small group of ROKN ships began a goodwill tour to over 16

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, page 37.

<sup>35</sup> Cloughly, Brian, "Korean Flashpoint Waits to be Ignited", *International Defense Review*, Sept. 1, 1996, Strategic and Security Issues; Vol. 29; No. 9; pg. 29.

countries, including Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Italy, and Japan. The Republic of Korea continues to improve and expand its naval presence vis-à-vis the South Korean defense industry. A key motivator for technological development and sudden growth in the ROKN was the threat of conflict with North Korea. This early strategic goal has been subsumed within the broader objective of defense-industrial self-sufficiency.<sup>36</sup>

ROK naval forces have prepared an operational posture to respond to a variety of North Korean military threats, including an all-out offensive, isolated armed incidents and provocations, incursions by armed perpetrators, and terrorist attacks. An improved early warning system and an enhanced quick-response posture forms a part of the ROKN strategic focus.

North Korean provocations, directed at South Korea, originate from the Armistice Agreement of 1953. As the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) serves as a land border separating North Korea and South Korea, the Northern Limit Line (NLL), is a water boundary extending seaward from the western and eastern edges of the DMZ. Hijacking fishing boats on the East and West Sea, as well as frequent penetrations across the NLL are examples of North Korean provocations. Tensions across the NLL climaxed into battle on June 15, 1999, when North Korean gunboats fired across the NLL. According to Lee Sung-Yul, a staff reporter for *The Korea Herald*, "A North Korean Navy vessel fired upon the South's patrol boats operating 5 kilometers south of the sea border. South Korean Navy ships returned fire, sinking a North Korean torpedo boat and damaging five others. Seven South Korean sailors were wounded, but there were no words from

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<sup>36</sup> "Climbing the Industrial Ladder," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, July 31, 1993, Vol. 20; No. 5; pg. 20.

Pyongyang on the casualties of North Korean troops. The gun battle lasted 14 minutes, between 9:28 a.m. and 9:42 a.m.”<sup>37</sup>

According to ROKN officials in Seoul, more threatening to South Korean naval ships than the North Korean patrol boats are Silkworm missiles and 100mm shore guns positioned close to the sea border. “North Korea’s 100mm gun, with a range of 21Km, can hit targets up to 6Km south of the NLL. Silkworm missiles, with a range of 95Km are also positioned close to the sea border and pose another series of threats to South Korean patrol boats.”<sup>38</sup>

The 15 June incident may threaten a larger scale and more overt mode of conflict in the West Sea. The ROKN is a small modern force, using U.S. weaponry and a potential blue-water capability. The DPRKN, in contrast, is outdated and built with Russian designs but with a larger order of battle. With more than 400 missile and torpedo-equipped coastal combatants, it is a force that could cause the smaller ROKN some long-term problems.<sup>39</sup>

The dawn of the millennium proves the Republic of Korea can survive in a maritime environment. Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Lee Soo Yong, and Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Rear Admiral Kim Moo Woong, constitute the top two ROK naval Officers. ROK Naval Fleet Command headquarters is at Chinhae, headed by Commander of the Naval Operations, Vice Admiral Suh Young Kil. Operational

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<sup>37</sup> Lee, Sung-Yul, “South Korea, U.S. Keep Close Eye on North as Tension Persists”, *The Korea Herald*, June 17, 1999.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Hollingsbee, Trevor, “Koreans Clash in the Yellow Sea”, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, July 1, 1999, section: News and Analysis: Vol. 11; pg. 7.

commands include: Commander First Fleet, commanded by RADM Choi Kichul, based at Donghae; Commander Second Fleet, commanded by RADM Nam Hae Il, based at Inchon; and Commander Third Fleet, commanded by RADM Kim Sung Man, based at Pusan.<sup>40</sup>

#### **D. SUMMARY**

The Korean peninsula has a vibrant maritime history. Bordering on the East Sea and the West Sea dictates the need for a maritime force. The onus rests on South Korean leaders to protect their borders, including sea-lanes of communications. The lifeblood of the South Korean economy is its shipping industry. Protecting these valuable sea-lanes of communications, in a technologically advanced era, challenges South Korean leaders to make some important decisions. The ROKN cannot compete against large modern navies, which are capable of (1) conducting sustained naval operations, and (2) maintaining multi-tasked platforms.

The Korean War taught the world many lessons, none more important to South Korea than the value of sea power. According to M. Cagle and F. Manson, "No war involving the United States exemplified the value of sea power better than the Korean War. The need of a strong, balanced, and adequate U.S. Navy for controlling the oceans for our purposes and for denying them to an enemy was made elementarily clear."<sup>41</sup>

Facts collected during the Korean War, from the United States perspective support the position of sea power, making it hard to deny its strategic value. An issue

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<sup>40</sup> Sharpe, Richard, "Jane's Fighting Ships 2000-2001", *Jane's Information Group Limited*, Sentinel House, 2000, pg. 406.

<sup>41</sup> Cagle, M. and Manson, F., *The Sea War in Korea*, United States Naval Institute, Annapolis, Maryland, 1957, page 492.

facing the ROK Navy is its capabilities to conduct sustained blue-water naval operations.

The ROKN's opportunity is ripe to expand its existing force into a modern blue water navy, looking several decades into the future.

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### III. KOREA'S POST-COLD WAR STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The disappearance of a bipolar system introduced United States leadership to a highly diffused world order. South Korea's strategic environment mirrored the goals of U. S. foreign policy. Stability on the Korean peninsula appears structurally sound, as the threat of communist expansion is virtually nonexistent. According to Kihl Young Whan, "Three emerging forces are particularly noticeable in the regional environment of Northeast Asia: a U.S.-led and U.S.-dominant system, the primacy of economics over security, and sustained economic growth of the Pacific Rim."<sup>42</sup>

Kihl Young Whan states future regional trends and patterns include, "(a) the threat of global and regional war diminishing; (b) an unlikely China and Japan security alliance; (c) Northern triangular ties of Pyongyang, Moscow, and Beijing eroding due to Seoul's successful opening of diplomatic ties with Moscow and Beijing; (d) greater prospect for a unified Korea; and (e) intra-regional conflict and cooperation in Southeast Asia increasing in intensity."<sup>43</sup>

The ROK's entrance to the post-Cold War setting included peace that Asians have known this century, together with the world's fastest growth and arms trade.<sup>44</sup> Northeast Asia's post-Cold War peace, albeit delicate, has been frequently challenged on the

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<sup>42</sup> Kihl, Young Whan, "Korea After the Cold War: An Introduction", in Kihl, Young Whan, *Korea and the World: Beyond the Cold War*, Westview Press, 1994, page 5.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> "Asia's Arms Race", *The Economist*, February 20, 1993, page 19-22.

Korean peninsula. South Korea's foreign policy focuses on North Korea. Established joint talks resulted in very little measurable success, but South Korean fears of a North Korean military invasion have decreased, following the 1998 North Korean famine.

#### **A. ROK- UNITED STATES**

The United States is the ROK's closest ally. Diplomatically, the United States supported South Korea via the international community. According to Lee Chae-Jin, "At the United Nations, the United States cosponsored a number of resolutions in favor of South Korea, maneuvered to reject the anti-Seoul campaign, and protected the United Nations Command and other UN operations involved in South Korea. Most important, the United States was instrumental in realizing the simultaneous admissions of South Korea and North Korea to the United Nations in 1991. Hence United States cooperation with South Korea in the United Nations and other international organizations was cemented."<sup>45</sup>

Former U.S. President George H. W. Bush alleviated South Korean fears of aggressive U.S. power concerning Korean internal affairs when he told former South Korean President Roh, in 1989, the United States was a friend and dependable ally for South Korea.<sup>46</sup> Questioned about the United States position on Korean unification, former President Bush spoke before the Korean National Assembly in January 1992 and said, "For forty years, the people of Korea have prayed for an end to this unnatural division. For forty years, you have kept alive the dream of one Korea. The winds of

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<sup>45</sup> Lee, Chae-Jin, "The United States and Korea: Dynamics of Changing Relations", quoted in Kihl, Young Whan, *Korea and the World: Beyond the Cold War*, Westview Press, 1994, page 69.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, page 70.

change are with us now. My friends, the day will come when this last wound of the Cold War struggle will heal. Korea will be whole again. For our part, I will repeat what I said here three years ago: The American people share your goal of peaceful reunification on terms acceptable to the Korean people. This is clear. This is simple. This is American policy.”<sup>47</sup>

South Korea’s *nordpolitik* policy was supported by the United States, despite the risk of South Korea de-emphasizing the importance of its U.S. alliance. U.S. Secretary of State James Baker addressed South Korea’s *nordpolitik* policy in 1991 stating, “Diplomatically, by effectively pursuing *nordpolitik*, the ROK was beginning to melt the last glacier of the Cold War. The establishment of full diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, the exchange of trade offices with China, and ascension to the United Nations...all clear the path for reducing tensions on the Korean peninsula and ultimately for reunification – a goal that our two peoples shared for over four decades.”<sup>48</sup>

The ROK, as the rest of Northeast Asia, benefited economically from the U.S.-ROK relationship. Three factors have made possible economic progress in South Korea: (a) the combination of sound economic policies and hard work by the East Asians; (b) U.S. policy of reopening international markets to Japan, especially in the 1950s and 1960s; and (c) regional security underpinned by the U.S. military presence in South Korea and Japan.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, page 71.

<sup>48</sup> U.S.–South Korean Relations, *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, July 8, 1991, pages 484-485.

<sup>49</sup> Dujarric, Robert, *Korea: Security Pivot in Northeast Asia*, Hudson Institute, 1998, page 115.

The ROK depended on U.S. military presence to maintain stability on the Korean peninsula. According to Robert Dujarric, "The United States' commitment to the region is multifaceted. It encompasses military bases and security treaties, diplomacy, trade, investment, culture, human rights advocacy, immigration, and education. All these elements contribute to the ties that bind both sides of the Northern Pacific. But the foundation stone of the U.S. engagement in Asia is the security relationship enshrined in the alliances with Korea and Japan."<sup>50</sup>

U.S. ground troops in Korea constitute the bedrock of the U.S.-ROK security relationship. Korean democracy, still developing, gains strength from U.S. presence. Most important, as a non-Asian country, the U.S. can deflect suspicion of territorial claims. The U.S. military, vis-à-vis the political impact of their presence, promotes economic development and expansion. South Korea grew into a major world trading country, as bilateral trade between the United States and South Korea reached more than \$US 40 billion in 1994. In 1994, the United States became the ROK's largest trading partner.<sup>51</sup>

The ROK weathered an arduous financial crisis in 1997-1998, but the impact slowed the powerful South Korean economy. South Korea was one of the world's poorest

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, page 116.

<sup>51</sup> Ku, Jae H. and Ok, Tae Hwan, *Change and Challenge on the Korean Peninsula: Developments, Trends, and Issues*, The Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., 1996, page 52.

countries only a generation ago, but as of August 1999, is the United States' eighth-largest trading partner and the 11<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world.<sup>52</sup>

The U.S. position on Korean unification, eloquently summed up by then acting Assistant Secretary of State Charles Kartman, "is to support our Korean allies in their efforts first to defend their country and join the U.S. in a prosperous future, and also if they choose, to unify themselves."<sup>53</sup>

Despite a series of successes, the U.S.-ROK post-Cold War relationship loosened compared to the pre-Cold War period, albeit neither side desired this relationship to falter. The ROK became economically stronger, as did its international status. South Korea perceived unequal arrangements in the bilateral relationship and challenged the U.S. to reevaluate its policies. Gridlock in Seoul and Washington created tension, but bickering aside, Seoul approached the United States for financial assistance when the Korean economic crisis emerged.

During Kim Dae Jung's presidency, evidence of a greater maturity in U.S.-ROK relations emerged. President Kim's pursued a comprehensive engagement policy toward the DPRK, which has all concerned states in this policy and he became a key player in Northeast Asian regional politics. His proactive policy towards Washington is important

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<sup>52</sup> U.S. Department of State's background notes on South Korea. See [http://www.state.gov/www/background\\_notes/south\\_korea\\_899\\_bgn.html](http://www.state.gov/www/background_notes/south_korea_899_bgn.html)

<sup>53</sup> Dujarric, Robert. *Korea: Security Pivot in Northeast Asia*, Hudson Institute, 1998, page 23.

to achieve an equal partnership. The Perry report of 1999 demonstrated Washington's support for President Kim's 'sunshine policy'.<sup>54</sup>

President Kim Dae Jung visited Washington, D.C. to meet with President George W. Bush in March, 2001. The importance and strength of the U.S.-ROK security alliance was praised for providing more than five decades of peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to continue the 1994 Agreed Framework, and called on North Korea for its successful implementation. According to a press conference by the U.S. Department of State, "President Bush and President Kim noted that the United States and the Republic of Korea are developing more mature and mutually beneficial bilateral economic and trade relations. Both sides agreed to work together closely to support Korea's economic reform efforts and to address bilateral trade issues."<sup>55</sup>

## **B. ROK-DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA (DPRK)**

Institutionalizing the peace process on the Korean peninsula has been an arduous task. Peaceful coexistence cannot survive built on habits of mistrust and patterns of rivalry. In 1990, high-level talks between North and South Korea's Prime Ministers produced little more than each side accepting the other. The fifth meeting took place in Pyongyang in October 1991.

Joint DPRK-ROK efforts to overcome hostilities in inter-Korean relations resulted in historical documents signed in 1991, including an agreement on

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<sup>54</sup> *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: External Affairs, South Korea*, Jane's Information Group, 2001, page 16.

<sup>55</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Joint U.S.-South Korea Statement on March 7 Bush-Kim Meeting", <http://208.243.114.93/topical/pol/arms/stories/01030763.htm>

reconciliation, non-aggression, exchanges and cooperation, and a joint declaration for de-nuclearization of the peninsula.<sup>56</sup>

The Basic Agreement, shown in table 1, is broken down into four chapters, each with numerous articles.

#### Korean Basic Agreement of 1991

<b>Chapter One: Pledges on Reconciliation</b>
Article 1: Mutual recognition and respect for each other's system
Article 2: Noninterference in the other's internal affairs
Article 3: Cessation of hostile propaganda
Article 4: Forbearance from attempts to overthrow the other side
Article 5: Conversion of the Armistice into a durable peace
Article 6: Measures to build cooperation and promote national interests abroad
Article 7: Establishment of a North-South liaison office at Panmunjon within three months of the exchange of ratified documents
Article 8: Creation of a North-South political committee within one month thereafter to implement and enforce these measures
<b>Chapter Two: Pledges On Non-Aggression</b>
Article 9: Promises the nonuse of force and non-aggression against each other
Article 10: Establishes the peaceful settlement of disputes through dialogue and negotiation
Article 11: Maintains the existing military demarcation line established by the July 27, 1953 armistice to define a zone of non-aggression
Article 12: Establishes a North-South joint military commission within three months to advance confidence-building measures and promote disarmament
Article 13: Provides for installing direct telephone links between the military authorities to prevent accidental conflict
Article 14: Forms a North-South military subcommittees within one month to implement these provisions
<b>Chapter Three: Pledges on Exchanges and Cooperation</b>
Article 15: A joint development of resources and economic exchange of goods and cooperation
Article 16: Exchanges and cooperation in varied areas, including science and technology, education, arts, health, sports, environment, and publishing/journalism
Article 17: Free travel and contacts between the two Koreas
Article 18: Free correspondence, meetings, and visits between members of divided

<sup>56</sup> Kihl, Young Whan, "The Politics of Inter-Korean Relations: Coexistence or Reunification", quoted in Kihl, Young Whan, *Korea and the World: Beyond the Cold War*, Westview Press, 1994, page 135.

families
Article 19: The reconnecting of railway lines and the opening of sea and air routes
Article 20: Postal and telecommunications contacts and efforts to guarantee their privacy
Article 21: Cooperation internationally to promote economic, cultural, and related activities abroad
Article 22: The establishment of a joint economic exchanges and cooperation commission in three months
Article 23: The creation of an exchanges and cooperation subcommittee within one month thereafter to carry out these agreements
<b>Chapter Four</b>
Article 24: An amendment procedure based on mutual concurrence
Article 25: Provides the agreement to take effect on the date the two sides exchange its text

**Table 1 Korean Basic Agreement of 1991**

Two key issues are the center of attention for inter-Korean relations, (a) suspected nuclear arms development, and (b) Pyongyang's unilateral rejection of the 1953 Armistice agreement. The Basic Agreement, ratified February 19, 1992, mysteriously omitted the issue of nuclear weapons. Kihl states the nuclear issue, addressed in the closing months of 1991, included three key developments:

- U.S. President George Bush announced on September 28, 1991, a drastic reduction of U.S. land-based tactical nuclear weapons deployed abroad
- President Roh Tae Woo of South Korea declared on November 8, 1991, that South Korea would not manufacture, store, deploy, or use nuclear weapons and called upon North Korea to join him in making the Korean peninsula a nuclear-free zone
- Prior to Roh's proposal, North Korea had already put forward its proposal for making the Korean peninsula a nuclear free zone.<sup>57</sup>

On December 31, 1991, North and South Korea agreed on the joint declaration on the de-nuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Outlined in Table 2, this agreement was

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, page 138.



designed to eliminate the danger of nuclear war through de-nuclearization, and to create an environment which supports peace and peaceful unification of Korea.<sup>58</sup>

#### Nuclear Issues Joint Declaration

<b>1991 Joint Korean Declaration on Nuclear Issues</b>
• Neither side shall not test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons
• Shall use nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes
• Shall not possess nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities
• Shall conduct inspection of the objects selected by the other side and agreed upon between the two sides, in accordance with procedures and methods determined by the South-North Joint Nuclear Control Commission
• Shall establish and operate a South-North Joint Nuclear Control Commission within one month of the effectuation of this joint declaration
• Shall put the declaration into force when both sides sign it into effect

**Table 2 Nuclear Issues Joint Declaration**

When North Korea and South Korea signed and ratified two monumental agreements: (a) the Basic Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, and Exchange and Cooperation; and (b) the Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, the expected outcome was an immediate improvement in inter-Korean relations. The outcome was disappointing, as the two sides fell back into their Cold War rivalry, with South Korea suspicious of North Korea's nuclear program. A summit meeting of Presidents Kim Young Sam and Kim Il Sung was arranged for the summer of 1994 but canceled due to the death of Kim Il Sung in July 1994.<sup>59</sup>

The Joint Nuclear Declaration created serious problems through thirteen North-South meetings. North Korea ultimately suspended talks over the 1993 U.S.-ROK joint

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, page 138.

<sup>59</sup> "Jane's External Affairs, South Korea", *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment-China and Northeast Asia*, 8 March 2001, section 7.8.1

military exercise, Team Spirit. The North Korean delegation presented conditions to resume North-South talks, which were politically unacceptable to South Korea.

According to *Vantage Point*, these North Korean conditions stated: “(a) the South must give up its policy of reliance on foreign powers. It must not rely on the U.S. and Japan politically, militarily, and economically. Instead, it must regard solidarity between the same ethnic group as more important; (b) the South must express its determination to oust U.S. troops from the south; (c) the South must suspend forever joint military exercises with foreign (U.S.) troops; and (d) the South must pull itself out from under the U.S. nuclear umbrella.”<sup>60</sup>

North Korean issues surrounding the 1953 Armistice Agreement has been a thorn in inter-Korean relations. North Korea withdrew from the Military Armistice Commission in 1994 and closed its side of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in 1996. The DPRK engaged in a multitude of military incursions across the DMZ and the NLL over the next three years. North Korea perceived South Korean President Kim Young Sam’s goal of Korean reunification through the absorption of North Korea. This strengthened the DPRK’s unwillingness to negotiate with Seoul, and further isolated the ROK diplomatically. International efforts to achieve solutions for major security problems such as the DPRK’s suspected nuclear weapons program, its unilateral abrogation of the 1953 Armistice agreement, and its missile development program, resulted in numerous setbacks, and no lasting successes.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Vantage Point*, Seoul, Volume 16, No. 4, April 1993, page 13.

<sup>61</sup> “Jane’s External Affairs, South Korea”, *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment-China and Northeast Asia*, 8 March 2001, section 7.8.1

President Kim Dae Jung played an instrumental role bringing the DPRK into a dialogue with the ROK and breaking the negative zero sum game which characterized inter-Korean relations since the Korean War. President Kim Dae Jung announced his 'Sunshine Policy' soon after coming to office. This far-reaching and proactive engagement policy towards Pyongyang was aimed at cooperation and reconciliation, separating political from economic issues, and governmental from private activity. The end product promoted better relations between North Korea and both the United States and Japan, and a pledge not to seek reunification of the Korean peninsula through the absorption of the DPRK.<sup>62</sup>

Relations between North Korea and South Korea were troubled in 1998 by frequent infiltrations by North Korean soldiers into South Korea. This development coupled with the DPRK's insistence to resume its nuclear program, and a serious naval clash in South Korean waters, drove President Kim Dae Jung to arrange another round of North-South talks. Days before the scheduled talks, naval forces from the DPRK and the ROK tangled with heavy losses handed to the DPRKN. Perhaps the most significant military exchanges since the end of the Korean War, the naval confrontation by far slowed the peace process. According to Political Risk Services, "Both sides agreed to hold the meetings as scheduled, but delaying tactics by North Korean representatives contributed to the collapse of talks[...]A breakthrough was achieved on April 10, 2000, when the government announced that it would hold a summit with North Korea in June

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

2000. The summit, held in Pyongyang on June 14-15, 2000, produced an agreement to reunite long separated Korean families; the first reunion took place on August 15.”<sup>63</sup>

Seoul’s ‘Sunshine Policy’ was called challenged in two separate incidents during the summer and autumn of 1999. The first inter-Korean naval clashes in the Yellow Sea since the Korean War took place in June. Another isolated incident was Pyongyang’s unilateral declaration of a new maritime border some 70 kilometers into South Korean waters September. The former resulted in DPRK naval violations and the latter resulted in the DPRK’s decision to not recognize the 1953 Northern Limit Line set up by the United Nations.<sup>64</sup>

### **C. ROK-PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

Seoul and Beijing exchanged trade representatives in April 1991, and a bilateral trade agreement followed on January 31, 1992. Although it took the form of a private accord between the China Chamber of International Commerce and the Korea Trade Promotion Corporation, the agreement ended discriminatory customs duties levied by China on goods imported from South Korea and provided mutual most-favored nation treatment. Official diplomatic missions between the two countries were exchanged in August 1992.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Political Risk Services , “South Korea Country Report”,  
[http://www.prsgroup.com/download/worldservice/S\\_Korea.pdf](http://www.prsgroup.com/download/worldservice/S_Korea.pdf)

<sup>64</sup> “Jane’s External Affairs, South Korea”, *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment-China and Northeast Asia*, 8 March 2001, section 7.8.1

<sup>65</sup> Lee, Hong Yung, “China and the Two Koreas: New Emerging Triangle”,  
quoted in Kihl, page 104.

Two-way trade between the ROK and the PRC reached \$5.8 billion in 1991, making China the ROK's fourth largest trading partner, after Japan, the United States, and Germany. South Korea was China's fifth-largest trading partner. The Chinese exported coal, petroleum, building materials, and agricultural and fishery products. Korea's major export items included electronics, textiles, and petrochemicals. Overall, China exported a large quantity of agricultural products – 15 percent of South Korea's imports of such labor.<sup>66</sup>

The ROK and the PRC formally established diplomatic relations on August 24, 1992. Whereas China's previous bond to North Korea involved strategic security concerns and ideological affinity, China's South Korea policy was economic based. Accepting two Koreas, China marked the emergence of a new order in Northeast Asia.

The 1992 ROK-PRC Joint communiqué stated the "Governments of the Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of China agree to develop the enduring relations of good neighbors, friendship, and cooperation on the basis of the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, and the principles of mutual respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence."<sup>67</sup>

China requires South Korea to accept the One-China policy, which the ROK does, but maintains its presence on the Korean peninsula via a dual Korean policy. Seoul accepts China's dual role, as the PRC continues to be the DPRK's primary ally. Adopting

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, page 106.

<sup>67</sup> Lee, Chae-Jin, "The Korean Peninsula and the Major Powers", Sejong Institute, 1998, page 120, cited from *Korea Herald*, August 25, 1992.

a dualistic Korean policy, China enhances its opportunities to influence Korean reunification. China is rapidly expanding its economic and military power, which may create the Korean peninsula situation China desires: a big brother – little brother arrangement.

Territorial and maritime issues involve contested boundaries for fishing and oil exploration rights. According to Robert Dujarric, “Once the ROK’s authority is extended to present-day North Korea, the scope for maritime and border disagreements will increase considerably because the ROK and China will share a land border and a longer maritime and airspace boundary. China and Korea take a hard-line view of their sovereignty and thus the disputes could take a nasty turn.”<sup>68</sup>

China has short and long term goals for the Korean peninsula. Next to the United States, China has the best opportunities to play a significant role in shaping the security environment of the Korean peninsula, and the whole of Northeast Asia. China is pro-actively planning several decades into the future and certainly the Korean peninsula matters to short and long-term Chinese policy.

According to Robert Dujarric, “The PRC wants peace in the region so that outsiders will engage in business with it. At least until recently, Beijing has discreetly given its blessing to the U.S. military presence in Korea because American forces deter the North from starting a war. Once the threat of war is gone, however, China may decide that it is only natural for Korea to (re) enter the sphere of Chinese influence.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Dujarric, page 67.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, page 46.

China seeks to maintain the current Armistice Agreement because it wants to continue advancing its economic interests. The last thing Beijing wants is trouble from its next-door neighbors. Live and let live appropriately describes the Chinese attitude in its relations to Northeast Asia: trade serves China's interests. Korean reunification is an issue Northeast Asia deals with constantly, but China does not want a unified Korea under American influence. Nurturing its relations with the ROK, befriending its neighbor and earning their trust is the crux of China's Korea policy.

#### **D. ROK – JAPAN**

South Korea and Japan are neighbors, but far apart due to longstanding painful issues. South Korea's mistrust of Japan, predicated by a generation subject to harsh Japanese rule from 1910-1945, influences future relations. Slow progress is forging the future of the strained relationship between the ROK and Japan, but Japan's earlier systematic efforts to eradicate Korea's indigenous culture has left an indelible hatred and fear of Japan in the minds of many older Koreans. According to Samuel S. Kim, "It seems that anti-Japanese demonstrations have become a favorite sport in South Korean society, and the Japanese government, as if to rub Japanese salt in the Korean nationalistic wound, seems chronically unable or unwilling to put an end to old historical enmities."<sup>70</sup>

South Korean issues of the ROK-Japan relationship include economic ventures, disputes over territorial demarcation, and the status of the 700,000 South Koreans living in Japan. As time passes, South Korea's fear and hatred of Japan may disappear, but the

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<sup>70</sup> Kim, Samuel S., "The Two Koreas and World Order", quoted in Kihl, page 43.

issues will remain until completely resolved. One such dispute includes the Tokto Islands, two small, uninhabited islands. South Korea claims the islands on the grounds that the occupation authorities excluded them from the Japanese administration by order of the SCAP on 29 January 1946, and placed them outside the 'MacArthur Line', which delimited the operational zone of Japanese fishermen.<sup>71</sup>

Japan's rebuttals to Korea's claims of the Tokto Islands dates back to the Tokugawa period, and proves territorial disputes are extremely complex. Another issue of contention involves comfort women. The treatment of Korean women, forced to provide sexual favors to Japan's Imperial Army, is a psychological and highly political issue still unresolved. Japanese authorities reluctance to admit responsibility and therefore prolonging claims for compensation fuelled doubts about their sincerity when expressing regrets for their past.<sup>72</sup>

Japan, successful separating politics and business, uses economics to strengthen the ROK-Japan relationship. According to Samuel S. Kim, "Japan has already become South Korea's chief source of imports (technology and components), and, after the United States, its largest export market; South Korea has become Japan's second largest export market and its second largest import source."<sup>73</sup>

A common antagonist to the ROK-Japan relationship is North Korea. A bilateral security dialogue between high-level ROK and Japanese Foreign Ministry officials took

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<sup>71</sup> Mendl, W., *Japan's Asia Policy: Regional Security and Global Interests*, Routledge, 1995, page 69.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, page 68.

<sup>73</sup> Kim, Samuel S., "The Two Koreas and World Order", quoted in Kihl, page 43.



place in June 1998. The September 1998 DPRK ballistic missile test over Japan resulted in agreement of both governments to conduct joint military exercises to counter the DPRK's aggressive military actions.<sup>74</sup>

Further joint ROK-Japan military knots, tied in 1999, resulted in the exchange of military information. Naval exercises and a military hotline were established.

Unfortunately, the differences in their respective naval programs are noticeably vast.

Japan spends a minute proportion of its GDP to support its self-defense forces, and able to lead Northeast Asia in maritime capabilities by doing more with less. Possessing highly valuable anti-submarine assets, Japan maintains a credible deterrence program.

One difference between Japan and South Korea is the Japanese government has made its Navy one of its top priorities. South Korea, on the other hand, has not put its Navy in the same light as Japan has put her Navy.

#### **E. ROK – RUSSIA**

Korean President Roh Tae Woo's *nordpolitik* declaration sought improved relations with China and the Soviet Union. Roh's willingness to expand internationally prompted Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to reevaluate his Asian foreign policy. Samuel S. Kim states, "In a speech at Krasnoyarsk on September 16, 1988, Gorbachev made a seven-point proposal to strengthen the security of the Asian-Pacific region."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: External Affairs, South Korea*, Jane's Information Group, 2001, page 12.

<sup>75</sup> Kim Samuel S. "The Two Koreas and World Order", in Kihl, page 85. For Gorbachev's speech at Krasnoyarsk, "Asian Policy", see *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* 40, October 19, 1988.

Events between the ROK and Russia proved fertile. Diplomatic ties between the ROK and the Soviet Union were established in September 1990 which saw a rapid broadening of economic, political, and military cooperation and exchanges.<sup>76</sup>

Priming the Soviet's pump were prospects of enormous economic gains. Gorbachev's report to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, describing his visit to South Korea stated that the Soviets needed to pay attention to the South Korean experience. According to Kim Ilpyong J., Gorbachev said, "We all know that South Korea was a dictatorial country not too long ago. If the Soviet Union and South Korea can combine the potential power of each country for beneficial and future-oriented economic development, we can certainly establish a creative and efficient model of economic cooperation...The South Korean leader is preparing to help the Soviet Union to participate in the integration process of the Asian-Pacific economic community."<sup>77</sup>

President Roh, promoting his *nordpolitik*, made history as the first ROK head of state to visit Moscow, from December 13-17, 1990. Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet head of state visited Seoul from April 19-20, 1991. The visits and summits consolidated Soviet-South Korean relations, and enhanced the environment of peace and stability in East Asia and on the Korean peninsula. But, Russia's foreign policy towards the ROK was at the expense of its relations with China and the DPRK. Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev assured Seoul in March 1992 that his government stopped selling

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<sup>76</sup> *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: External Affairs, South Korea*, Jane's Information Group, 2001, page 15.

<sup>77</sup> Kim, Ilpyong J., "The Soviet Union/Russia and Korea: Dynamics of New Thinking", quoted in Kihl, page 89.

weapons to North Korea and ended technical assistance to the North Korean nuclear power program.<sup>78</sup>

Despite its price paid for relations with the ROK, prospective economic gains were worth the risk. Russian Defense Minister Grachov and his South Korean counterpart signed a memorandum in 1993, which promoted stronger ties. Regular exchanges of military and defense officials, military intelligence swaps, and South Korea's option to buy Russian military equipment demonstrated the depth of the relationship.<sup>79</sup>

North Korea must have felt betrayed by its former partner, and Russia's involvement with South Korea angered the DPRK. When Moscow allowed one of their military observers to attend the ROK's Team Spirit exercise in March 1993, the DPRK lodged sharp protests.<sup>80</sup>

Trade benefits Russia and the ROK. According to Charles E. Zeigler, "Russian-South Korean trade has continued to expand steadily, from \$1.2 billion in 1992 to a record \$3.3 billion in 1995, with Russia recording a \$477 million surplus. South Korean firms have aided Russian factories in defense conversion, and some South Korean businesses have contracted to operate in the Nakhodka Free Economic Zone."<sup>81</sup>

The gradual improvement in ROK-Russian relations encouraged Moscow to announce, in 1995, its 1961 friendship treaty with Pyongyang was no longer valid.

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<sup>78</sup> Dujarric, page 104.

<sup>79</sup> Zeigler, Charles E., "Russia and the Korean Peninsula", *Problems of Post Communism*, November-December 1996, page 9. Quoted in Dujarric, page 105.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, page 105.

Contrary to its statement, according to Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, "Moscow is allegedly providing Pyongyang with satellite intelligence data on the US and ROK military bases, and Russian reconnaissance aircraft continue to monitor ROK air defenses. In August 1999, it was revealed that Russia had secretly delivered 10 MiG-29 kits to the DPRK, the first since 1992."<sup>82</sup>

The ROK can view Russian actions as either betrayal or business because despite Russia's transfer of aircraft to Pyongyang, the ROK and Russia have agreed to continue the exchange of training military personnel. DPRK submarine incursions into South Korean waters prompted Russia to respond positively to ROK requests for technological help in detecting the underwater signatures of some DPRK submarines.<sup>83</sup>

In September 1999, South Korean and Russian defense chiefs met and the results were impressive. According a Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, several agreements were reached: "(a) the establishment of annual joint defense policy consultations and joint search and rescue naval exercises, (b) the creation of a committee on military technology transfers and weapons supplies, and (c) the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding on military exchanges."<sup>84</sup>

## **F. ROK – MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS**

The ROK built a network of international links in the 1990's to normalize relations with China and Russia, and to ensure its entry into the United Nations. Ex-

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<sup>82</sup> *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: External Affairs, South Korea*, Jane's Information Group, 2001, page 15.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, page 16.

President Kim Young Sam's aggressive globalization and liberalization program produced an increase in trading and economic ties. The ROK is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). South Korean companies have set up operations globally. Advancing what Kim Young Sam started, President Kim Dae Jung adopted reforms to strengthen his market economy and improve foreign investment and trading arrangements.

The ROK belongs to several regional economic or security cooperation groups. South Korea belongs to APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation); ARF (the ASEAN Regional Forum); the ASEAN PMC (Post Ministerial Conference); the Four-Party (Korean) Conference; and the TCOG (Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group), including Japan, the United States, and the ROK. Additionally, South Korea was a founding member of the extra-regional group ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting), established in 1996.<sup>85</sup>

The ROK was one of the founding members of APEC, established in 1989. APEC originated out of overwhelming interests to advance Asia-Pacific economies and a desire to harness a sense of community. The Republic of Korea's relations with ASEAN began in November 1989. The focus of the relationship initially was primarily concerned with Economic and commercial cooperation. The Republic of Korea was elevated to the status of a Dialogue Partner in July 1991 at the 24<sup>th</sup> annual Ministerial meeting in Kuala

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, page 9.

Lumpur, Malaysia. This new status promoted expansion of cooperation to include science, technology and human resources development.<sup>86</sup>

ASEAN's Regional Forum provides the ROK with opportunities to promote and expand its regional concerns. The inaugural ARF Ministerial Meeting—held July 25, 1994, in Bangkok, Thailand—established the ARF as the first region-wide multilateral forum for consultations on numerous Asia-Pacific security issues.<sup>87</sup>

The Trilateral Coordination and oversight Group includes the United States, South Korea, and Japan. Concerned with developments in the DPRK, delegations from the three countries discuss maintaining stability on the Korean peninsula while striving for improved relations with North Korea, while not dismissing the North Korean missile and nuclear programs. The three delegations affirmed that the ongoing [as of 1999] policy review being conducted by U.S. North Korean Policy Coordinator William J. Perry offered increased stability on the Korean peninsula and improved relations with the DPRK, while addressing concerns regarding North Korean missile and nuclear programs.<sup>88</sup>

## **G. SUMMARY**

A dramatic manifestation of recent changes that occurred in Asia can be found on the Korean peninsula. In a relatively short time, the ROK established diplomatic relations with Mongolia, the Soviet Union, and China. North Korea and South Korea became

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<sup>86</sup> "Asean-Republic of Korea Dialogue", <http://www.asean.or.id/dialog/mrok.htm>

<sup>87</sup> "ASEAN Regional Forum", <http://secretary.state.gov/www/briefings/statements/1998/ps981030a.html>

<sup>88</sup> "U.S., ROK, and Japan Joint Statement on North Korea Policy" June 26, 1999. <http://www.iatp.unibel.by/USAInfo/usiaweb/regional/ea/easec/trilat26.htm>

members of the United Nations in 1991. Developments evolved between North Korea and South Korea in late 1991 into joint talks which demonstrated, over an extended period, a frustrating pattern of on again – off again.

The ROK's only bilateral defense treaty is with the United States (the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953), and the ROK does have another defense agreement with the sixteen nations involved in the Korean War under the UN auspices albeit this arrangement is virtually lifeless.

Since assuming office in February 1998, President Kim Dae Jung's political and economic astuteness has elevated his country's stature. Post-Cold War developments, most importantly easing tension on the Korean peninsula has won South Korea universal support by the international community.

The ROK will maintain regional security on the Korean peninsula with continued U.S. military presence. Strengthening ties with Japan, definitely a long-term project, may eventually improve South Korea's influence when dealing with the United States. Many issues remain unsolved between the ROK and Japan, but the lines of communication are open.

Economics proved to be a dominant theme establishing relationships with countries previously sided in the Socialist camp. Normalizing ties with China, and Russia, prove South Korea is capable of surviving in the international community, but may need an occasional helping hand as it continues to develop its personal brand of democracy.

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## IV. KOREAN NAVAL FORCE STRUCTURE

### A. ROK NAVAL LIMITATIONS

South Korea improved its naval capabilities in quantitative and qualitative terms. According to Sam Bateman, "the South Korean navy was mainly a coastal defense force with patrol craft and some obsolete larger vessels of U.S. origin. However, this navy is in a major mode of growth with the acquisition of updated P-3C maritime patrol aircraft, with longer-term aspirations to more powerful sea control capabilities, including large AAW (anti-air warfare) destroyers, broadly equivalent to the Japanese Kongo class Aegis vessels, and independent propulsion submarines."<sup>89</sup>

Northeast Asia's shifting balance of maritime power could be (a) the result of economic growth fueled by a greater desire to firmly control strategically important Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), and vital Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs); or (b) the result of a declining western-led maritime power and the rise of new regional maritime powers.

South Korea, considered a medium maritime power, is in one of the most volatile regions in the world. Maritime issues and security are dominant themes to Asia-Pacific countries, and they recognize the fragility of economic and strategic trends depend on maritime resources. According to Kim Duk-Ki, "The ROKN is placing an emphasis on

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<sup>89</sup> Bateman, Sam. "Sea Change in Asia-Pacific," *Jane's Navy International*, Vol. 101, Issue 8, October 1, 1996, page 29.

its long-range capabilities, procuring hundreds of new combat planes from the United States and building dozens of new frigates and destroyers.”<sup>90</sup>

South Korean President Kim Dae Jung is shaping the ROKN expansion programs. While recently addressing the graduating class of midshipmen at the Korea Naval Academy in the southeastern port of Jinhae, President Kim said “We will soon have a strategic mobile fleet that protects state interests in the five major oceans and play a role in keeping peace in the world. I will render unreserved support to our Navy so that it can grow to become a blue water navy.”<sup>91</sup>

Trends of significant consistency in Northeast Asian regional military acquisition programs indicate an awareness of the urgency to obtain highly accurate, more lethal, and more reliable weapon systems. Enhancements to South Korean regional forces include an improved national command, control and communications (C3) system; national strategic and tactical intelligence systems; multi-role fighter aircraft, with maritime attack as well as air superiority capabilities; maritime surveillance aircraft; anti-ship missiles; surface combatants, with embarked helicopters; submarines; electronic warfare systems; and rapid deployment forces.<sup>92</sup>

South Korea’s interest to modernize its naval force resulted in money and energy spent enhancing its maritime power. Replacing outdated systems with efficient automated

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<sup>90</sup> Kim, Duk-Ki, “Cooperative Maritime Security in Northeast Asia,” *Naval War College Review*, Winter 1999, page 58.

<sup>91</sup> Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy, *ROK President Promotes Expansion of ROKN to Blue Water Status*, February 2001.

<sup>92</sup> Dibb, Paul. “The Future Military Capabilities of Asia’s Great Powers”, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, Vol. 7, Issue 5, May 1, 1995, page 231.

systems with the latest technology, the ROK navy continues to modernize. According to Sam Bateman, “the rationale for these developments includes, (a) the security of sea-borne trade; (b) the need for self-reliance in the face of concerns over the reliability of U.S. presence in the region; (c) longer-term prospects for reunification with North Korea (inevitably leading to the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Korean peninsula); and (d) deeply held suspicions over the motives of Korea’s neighbors, Japan and China.”<sup>93</sup>

Modernizing the ROK Navy involved several phases. The first phase began in the late 1970s, which placed an emphasis on enhancing range, endurance, and capabilities – including improved anti-submarine warfare. The goal was to expand coastal defense while promoting local shipbuilding operations. The first modernization phase produced over 130 fast attack patrol craft.

The second phase of development, launched in the late 1980s and still underway, focuses on a multi-dimensional force still oriented mainly to coastal defense. This involved three key programs: the KDX frigate (often referred to as a destroyer), the Chang Bogo (209 class) submarine, and anti-submarine patrol aircraft.<sup>94</sup> The Republic of Korea Navy has been searching for updated platforms. Recently the ROKN ordered three Type 214 submarines with the Howaldtswerke Deutsche Werke AG shipyard. Previous

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<sup>93</sup> Bateman, Sam. “Sea Change in Asia-Pacific”, *Jane’s Navy International*, Vol. 101, Issue 8, October 1, 1996, page 29.

<sup>94</sup> “Effecting a Shift in Strategy”, *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, Vol. 22, Issue 18, November 5, 1994, page 21.

negotiations with Russia for three Kilo-class submarines in an 'arms for debts' deal have now been abandoned.<sup>95</sup>

South Korea's blue-water navy concept became strengthened with the acquisition of replenishment tankers. The first of these were operational in 1991, providing a new capability for offshore support.<sup>96</sup> The Republic of Korea is seriously looking at international and regional maritime commitments with the future in mind. According to Jane's Defense Weekly correspondent Malcolm Davis, "South Korea is developing a very sophisticated naval capability centered on the KDX destroyer project. The ROK Navy operates on the basis that as a global trading nation, it must have the military capability to protect that trade. The ROKN therefore perceives its operational environment as extending from the Pacific coast of the Americas through to the coast of East Africa."<sup>97</sup>

Modernizing and expanding the ROKN requires changes and visionary naval leaders capable of projecting the force structure several decades in the future. The ROKN reorganized into three fleets in 1986, with each fleet commanded by a Rear Admiral. In 1987, the ROKN formally recognized the ROK Marines as an independent service component, no longer an extension of the ROKN. As of April 2001, the Chief of Naval Operations is Admiral Lee Soo Yong, and the Vice Chief of Naval Operations is Rear

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<sup>95</sup> "Three Type 214s for South Korea", *Military Technology*, Bonn, November 2000, page 85.

<sup>96</sup> "Effecting a Shift in Strategy", *Jane's Defense Weekly*, Vol. 22, Issue 18, November 5, 1994, page 22.

<sup>97</sup> Davis, Malcolm, "Back of Course", *Jane's Defense Weekly*, January 19, 2001, page 4.

Admiral Kim Moo Woong. Fleet Command is exercised from the headquarters at Chinhae by the Commander of the Naval Operations, Vice Admiral Suh Young Kil. Operational commands include: Commander First Fleet, commanded by RADM Choi Kichul, based at Donghae; Commander Second Fleet, commanded by RADM Nam Hae Il, based at Inchon; and Commander Third Fleet, commanded by RADM Kim Sung Man, based at Pusan.<sup>98</sup>

The ROKN currently has over 33,000 active duty personnel with 17,000 (Navy and Marines) conscripts; every conscript obligated to 27 months of service.<sup>99</sup> Shipborne aircraft (helicopters): 17 Westland Super Lynx Mk 99 with operational speed of 125 knots (ASW), and 6 Aerospatiale Alouette III, with operational speeds up to 113 knots (Marine support). Land based maritime aircraft: 8 Grumman S-2A Tracker (maritime surveillance/ASW), 8 Lockheed P3C Orion (maritime patrol with 4 Harpoon ASM), and 5 Rheims-Cessna F 406 Caravan II (Maritime surveillance).<sup>100</sup>

The strength of the ROKN is increasing. Although the Republic of Korea's military budget continually favors its Army, the ROKN has made considerable strides despite limited funding.

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<sup>98</sup> *Jane's Fighting Ships 2000-2001*, edited by Captain Richard Sharpe, RN, One Hundred and Third Edition, Jane's Information Group Limited, Sentinel House, 2000, page 406.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, page 413.

ROK Naval Order of Battle 1999-2000

TYPE	ACTIVE (RESERVE)	BUILDING (PROPOSED)
Submarines (Patrol)	8	1 (3)
Submarines (Midgets)	11	-
Destroyers	8	1 (2)
Frigates	9	-
Corvettes	28	-
Fast Attack Craft – Missile	5	-
Fast Attack Craft – Patrol	85	-
Minehunters	7	2 (2)
Minesweepers	8	-
Minelayers	2	-
LSTs	10	-
LSMs	3	-
LCU/LCM/LCAC	20	-
Logistic Support Ships	3	-

**Table 3 ROK Naval Order of Battle<sup>101</sup>**

Submarines (Patrol): Chang Bogo (Type 209) Class

Eight Chang Bogo Class submarines are in operation. Originally laid down in 1989, these submarines displace 1,100 tons surfaced, and 1,285 tons submerged. Measuring 183.7 x 20.3 x 18 feet, Chang Bogo class submarines operate four diesel generators for main machinery, capable of 11 knots of speed on the surface and 22 knots submerged. Endurance on the surface at 8 knots is 7,500 miles and ship's complement includes 33 personnel (6 officers).

Equipped with eight 21-inch (533 mm) bow tubes for torpedoes, Chang Bogo class submarines can carry torpedoes and/or mines, 21 mines in lieu of torpedoes depending on the mission. The onboard sonar is a hull mounted, with passive and active modes. The first refit of this submarine class is expected to occur in 2001 when the hulls

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid, page 406.

may be stretched to the Type 1400 standard and include submarine Harpoon surface-surface missile capabilities.<sup>102</sup>

#### Submarines (Midgets)

ROKN assets include two KSS-1 Tolgare Class, and nine Dolphin (Cosmos) Class midget submarines. Standard displacement is 150 tons surfaced, 175 tons dived for Tolgare Class; 70 tons surfaced, 83 tons dived for Cosmos Class midget submarines. Dimensions for the Tolgare Class are 82 x 6.9 feet; Cosmos Class midget submarines are much smaller at 25.1 x 2.1 feet. Power is provided via diesel generator, motor, and shaft. Speed in knots is nine surfaced, six dived.

Tolgare class midget submarines are equipped with two 406mm torpedo tubes, and the Cosmos Class is equipped with two 533 mm torpedo tubes. Tolgare Class mini submarines went into operation for the ROKN in 1983. Cosmos Class mini submarines are used by ROK Marines, have limited endurance and operate within coastal waters only. All mini submarines are based at Cheju Island.<sup>103</sup>

#### Destroyers: 5 Gearing Class DDG, 3 Okpo Class DDG, plus proposed KDX-2 Class

According to an article in *Naval Forces*, "South Korea's naval programs have become more capable with the production of the KDX series of advanced destroyers. The KDX series of destroyers are underway with three new 3900 ton KDX 1 series entering service since 1998. A follow on class of six 5000 ton KDX 2 destroyers for anti-air warfare should begin joining the fleet in 2002/2003. More significantly, it is hoped by the

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<sup>102</sup> *Jane's Fighting Ships 2000-2001*, edited by Captain Richard Sharpe, RN, One Hundred and Third Edition, Jane's Information Group Limited, Sentinel House, 2000, pg. 407.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, pg 406.

ROKN that the KDX 2 class will be followed by the 6000+ ton KDX 3 class Aegis DDG in 2010.”<sup>104</sup>

All five Gearing Class DDG's in the ROKN service are decommissioned U.S. warships, laid down in the mid 1940s. Standard displacement is 2,425 tons, 3,470 under a full load. Dimensions are 390.5 x 41.2 x 19 feet. Main machinery includes four 600-pound boilers, two GE turbines, and two shafts. Maximum speed is 30 knots, range of 3,275 miles at 11 knots, 975 miles at 30+ knots.

All but one of the Gearing Class DDG's are equipped with two quad Harpoon launchers. A common denominator includes four 5-inch guns, two 40mm guns, two GE 20mm Vulcan Gatling guns, six 324 mm torpedo tubes, and the capability of carrying depth charges. All are equipped with air search radar, hull mounted sonar, and a firing control system. Only four can operate and maintain a small helicopter.

According to Jane's Fighting Ships, “the first pair of Gearing Class DDG's acquired by the ROKN from the U.S. occurred in 1977, the third DDG transferred ownership from the U.S. to the ROK in 1981. Under the U.S. Navy's Fleet Rehabilitation and Modernization program, the DDG's were fitted with a small helicopter hangar and flight deck. Additional deck strengthening enabled the positioning of Vulcan Gatling guns in the after end of the ship.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> “Naval Shipbuilding Programs in Asia and the Middle East”, *Naval Forces*, Aldershot, 2000. For more, see <http://www.usaid.kiev.ua/index.html>

<sup>105</sup> *Jane's Fighting Ships 2000-2001*, edited by Captain Richard Sharpe, RN, One Hundred and Third Edition, Jane's Information Group Limited, Sentinel House, 2000, pg. 408.



### Okpo Class DDG

There are three Okpo DDG's in service, each displacing 3,855 tons. Also known as King Kwanggeto Class destroyers, they are designed to replace the aging Gearing Class WWII vintage destroyers currently in service in the South Korean Navy.<sup>106</sup> Built by Daewoo in Okpo from June 1995 to July 1996, overall measurements are 444.2 x 46.6 x 13.8 feet, with a top speed of 30 knots, and a complement of 170 personnel. These DDG's are equipped with 8 McDonnell Douglas Harpoon missiles, 16 cells with Raytheon Sea Sparrow missiles, 1 Otobreda 5 inch gun, and 2 Signaal 30mm Goalkeeper self defense guns. Capable of carrying torpedoes, countermeasures, and 1 Westland Super Lynx, and outfitted with the newest air, surface, and fire control radars, Okpo Class DDG's are the pride of the ROKN Fleet.<sup>107</sup>

### (KDX-2)

The first KDX-2 DDG will be in service by 2003, and the ROKN will replace its inventory of ex-U.S. Navy WWII destroyers with a modern force. In less than 10 years the ROKN's anti-air warfare capability will have gone from Sea Sparrow to Aegis, giving the ROKN a capability approaching Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> "King Kwanggeto Class", *Periscope*, February 1999. Available at <http://www.usaid.kiev.ua/index.html>

<sup>107</sup> *Jane's Fighting Ships 2000-2001*, edited by Captain Richard Sharpe, RN, One Hundred and Third Edition, Jane's Information Group Limited, Sentinel House, 2000, pg. 409.

<sup>108</sup> "ROK Navy Proceeds with Building New DDGs", *Sea Power*, Washington, April 1999, page 58.

### Frigates: Ulsan Class (FFG)

The ROKN has nine Ulsan Class FFG's, with a full load displacement of 2,180 tons. Overall dimensions are 334.6 x 37.7 x 11.5 feet. Using gas turbines and diesels for main machinery, ships of this class can make revolutions for 34 knots in the gas turbine configuration, 18 knots on diesels. Manning requires each FFG to have a crew of 150 personnel, including 16 officers.

These frigates have steel hulls with aluminum alloy superstructures, and a stern-wedge hull design. The superstructure is bulky, the bow is sharply raked. Ulsan Class FFG's are equipped with four twin McDonnell Douglas Harpoon launchers, two 3-inch (76mm) OTO Melara guns, and six-324mm MK 32 torpedo tubes. Depth charges, and counter measures are standard equipment. Air and surface search radars, coupled with fire control radar and sonar make Ulsan Class FFG's great for coastal patrol. Comparable to U.S. Oliver Hazard Perry Class FFG's, these hulls are steel constructed with an aluminum alloy structure.<sup>109</sup>

### Corvettes: 24 Po Hang Class, 4 Dong Hae Class

Po Hang Class corvettes weigh 1,220 tons under a full load, and measure 289.7 x 32.8 x 9.5 feet. Like the Ulsan Class FFG's, Po Hang Class corvettes are powered by both gas turbine and/or diesel. Equipped with only one LM 2500 gas turbine, top speed is 32 knots. Crew complement is 95 personnel, including 10 officers.

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<sup>109</sup> *Jane's Fighting Ships 2000-2001*, edited by Captain Richard Sharpe, RN, One Hundred and Third Edition, Jane's Information Group Limited, Sentinel House, 2000, pg. 410.

Missiles carried are the Aerospatiale MM 38 Exocet type, with active radar homing out to 23 nautical miles. Po Hang Class Corvettes are also equipped with one or two (depending on hull number) 76-mm OTO MELARA gun. Some early versions of this class carry four Emerson Electric 30-mm guns, while later hulls are equipped with four Breda 40-mm guns. Torpedoes, depth charges and countermeasures are standard features.<sup>110</sup>

Dong Hae Class corvettes are smaller than their counterparts, and displace 1,076 tons under a full load, and measure 256.2 x 31.5 x 8.5 feet. Equipped with one LM 2500 gas turbine and 2 diesels, maximum speed is 31 knots. Standard complement is 95 personnel, including 10 officers.

Weapons carried on Dong Hae corvettes are identical to Po Hang corvettes, except missiles and two Bofors 40-mm guns replace the Breda 40-mm guns. Torpedoes, depth charges and countermeasures are standard features.

#### Fast Attack Craft – Missile (PCFG)

Five Pae Ku (PSMM 5) Class fast attack craft each displacing 268 tons under a full load, and measure 176.2 x 23.9 x 9.5 feet. The main machinery consists of six Avco Lycoming TF-35 gas turbines, with speeds up to 40+ knots. Crew complement is normally 32 personnel.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, pg. 413.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

### Fast Attack Craft – Patrol: Sea Dolphin and Wildcat Class

The majority of the ROKN vessels are the Sea Dolphin Class (PCF) and the Wildcat Class (PCF). Sea Dolphin PCF's displace 170 tons, measure 121.4 x 22.6 x 5.6 feet, and powered by two diesel engines capable of reaching speeds up to 37 knots. Ideally suited for its mission, these vessels are light, fast, and form the basis of the coastal patrol effort against incursions by North Korean naval forces. Crew complement is 31 personnel, with five officers. Guns carried include two Emerson Electric 30-mm and either two General Electric 20-mm Gatling guns or one U.S. 3-in/76-mm gun. This class of ship was built entirely by South Korean companies. Minor gun variations and superstructure changes have occurred in later ships of this class.<sup>112</sup>

Wildcat Class fast attack craft displace 140 tons under a full load, measure 108.9 x 22.6 x 7.9 feet and are powered by two or three diesel engines offering top speeds up to 40+ knots. Normal crew load out is 29, including five officers. Two Aerospatiale MM 38 Exocet missiles are carried on all Wildcat Class PCF's.<sup>113</sup>

### Minehunters: Swallow Class

There are seven minehunters in the ROKN service and seven more are under construction. Displacing 520 tons under a full load, overall dimensions are 164 x 27.2 x 8.6 feet. Using two diesel engines, maximum speed is 15 knots. These minehunters are equipped with bow thrusters for operational necessity. Normal complement is 44

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<sup>112</sup> *Jane's Fighting Ships 2000-2001*, edited by Captain Richard Sharpe, RN, One Hundred and Third Edition, Jane's Information Group Limited, Sentinel House, 2000, pg. 414.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

personnel, including five officers, plus four divers. Guns carried include one 20-mm, and two 7.62-mm machine guns.

South Korean companies built the first of these minehunters in 1986. The seven minehunters currently under construction are slightly larger at 600 tons (full load), and each will have an advanced and fully integrated tactical minehunting system.

#### Minesweepers: MSC 268 and MSC 289 Class

These minesweepers were supplied to the ROK with wooden hulls and non-magnetic fittings by the United States. The first minesweeper transferred to South Korea in 1959. These former U.S. built coastal minesweepers have wooden hulls and were built specifically for South Korea under the US military Aid Program.<sup>114</sup>

Full load displacement is 370 tons, and overall dimensions are 141.1 x 26.2 x 8.5 feet for the 268 Class; 145.4 x 27.2 x 12 feet for the 289 Class. Powered by twin diesels on twin shafts, maximum speed is 14 knots. Crew configuration is normally forty personnel. Two 20-mm guns and three 7.62-mm machine guns are standard on all minesweepers. Sonar equipment used for minehunting is hull mounted, utilizing high frequency.<sup>115</sup>

#### Minelayers: Won San Class

Built by Hyundai in 1994, the Won San displaces 3,300 tons under a full load. Measuring 340.6 x 49.2 x 11.2 feet, the Won San is powered by diesel engines.

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<sup>114</sup> "MSC 551 Kum San Class", *Periscope*, April 1999. Available at <http://www.usaid.kiev.ua/index.html>

<sup>115</sup> *Jane's Fighting Ships 2000-2001*, edited by Captain Richard Sharpe, RN, One Hundred and Third Edition, Jane's Information Group Limited, Sentinel House, 2000, pg. 415.

Maximum speed is 22 knots with a range of 4,500 miles at 15 knots. Normal complement is 160 personnel.

Guns carried include one OTO Melara 3-inch (76-mm), and two Breda 40-mm. Torpedoes are available in six 324-mm launchers (two triple launchers). Mines launched at the stern can be up to 300 mines deployed at a time. Countermeasures include decoys, chaff launchers, electronic surveillance and electronic counter measures. The sonar system is bow mounted and the Won San has a helicopter platform but does not normally carry a helicopter onboard. Original plans called for building three ships of this class but due to fiscal constraints, building was limited to one hull.<sup>116</sup>

#### Landing Ships: 6 510, 511-1152 Class; 4 Alligator Class

The older 510, 511-1152 Class LST's constructed in the United States in the mid-1940s have a full load displacement of 4,080 tons. Measuring 328 x 50 x 14 feet, these ships operate two diesel engines for a maximum speed of 11.6 knots. Normal crew complement is 80 personnel. Military lift includes 2,100 tons including twenty military tanks. Eight Bofors 40-mm guns and two 20-mm guns provide minimal self-defense capability. Transferred from the United States to South Korea between 1955-1959, these ships are near the end of their service life but are still operational.<sup>117</sup>

#### Alligator Class

Constructed in South Korea between September 1992 – February 1999, the ROKN operates four Alligator Class LST's. Total displacement is 4,278 tons and these ships measure 369.1 x 50.2 x 9.8 feet. Two diesel engines and two shafts produce

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, pg. 416.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, pg. 414.

maximum speeds of 16 knots. Crew complement is 169 personnel and military lift includes 200 troops, and six 3-ton vehicles. Onboard guns include two Breda 40-mm and two Vulcan 20-mm Gatling, and these ships are equipped with a small helicopter platform.<sup>118</sup>

### LSM

Three former U.S. Navy medium landing ships are in the ROKN. Total displacement is 1,095 under a full load and measure 203.5 x 34.6 x 8.2 feet. Powered by two diesel engines, the maximum speed is 13 knots. Crew complement is 75 plus 50 troops. Military lift is 350 tons and installed for self-defense are two Bofors 40-mm and four Oerlikon 20-mm guns.<sup>119</sup>

### LCU/LCM/LCF

Korean-built utility landing craft are copies of the United States LCU 1610-class utility landing craft, but with a higher pilothouse. Welded steel construction with bow and stern ramps allow for 190 tons of cargo capacity, including 2 medium tanks; up to 350 troops can be embarked for short distances. The cargo deck is 100 feet x 18 feet.<sup>120</sup>

These vessels displace 415 tons, measure 134.4 x 28.8 x 5.9 feet, and use two diesel engines to power these landing craft. Maximum speed is 13 knots, and the crew supports 16, including two officers. Military lift is 150 tons, and two Oerlikon guns provide weapons for self-defense.

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> "LCU 1610 Mulkae 72 Class", *Periscope*, 2001. Available at <http://periscope.ucg.com/docs/weapons/ships/amphib/w0001650.html>

Ten LCM 8 Class ships are in operation. Full displacement is 115 tons and measurements are 74.5 x 21 x 4.6 feet. Powered by 4 diesel engines, maximum speed is 11 knots. Military lift is 55 tons, and crew complement is 11 personnel. Former U.S. Army craft, finally transferred to the ROKN occurred in 1978.

Only one LCF is in the ROKN service: Solgare Class fast landing craft. Displacing 120 tons under a full load, and measuring 82.7 x 39.4 x 25.6 feet, this ship operates two gas turbines and can generate speeds up to 65 knots. This ship is normally crewed by eight personnel and capable of carrying up to 27 tons of military lift, including one vehicle and 65 troops.<sup>121</sup>

#### Logistic Support Ships: Chun Jee Class (AOR)

There are three ships in this class and each displaces 7,500 tons. Dimensions are 426.5 x 58.4 x 21.3 feet and built entirely by Hyundai in Ulsan from May 1990-July 1997. Powered by diesel engines, the maximum speed is 20 knots. Cargo capacity is rated at 4,200 tons liquid; 450 tons solid. Four Emerlec 30-mm or two Breda 40-mm and two General Electric 20-mm Vulcan Gatling guns provide sufficient self-defense.

Chun Jee AOR's are equipped with underway replenishment stations on both sides, modeled off the Italian Stromboli Class. There is a helicopter available but no hangar facilities. Future construction of this class is possible when funds become available.<sup>122</sup>

According to Malcolm Davis, "the ROKN has drawn up impressive goals for its long-term naval development. Included in its future vision for a global naval capability

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, pg. 415.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, pg. 416.



for the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a 10,000 – 12,500 ton amphibious transport dock (LPX) to be commissioned starting in 2005.”<sup>123</sup>

## **B. ROK NAVAL REGIONAL/INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS**

Top priorities for the ROK armed forces include the maintenance of a strong military posture, enhanced war sustainability, and strengthened intangible military capabilities. This can be achieved through maintaining a crisis management system and developing a command and control system for joint operations, and an effective counter-infiltration posture.<sup>124</sup>

ROK naval regional commitments are primarily concerned with North Korean maritime movement. ROK coastal patrols ensure protection of its EEZ and SLOCs, but South Korea is a coastal nation clearly aware of the significance of its SLOCs. According to Lee Seo-Hang, “The importance of the SLOCs for Korea may be seen when the amount of ocean-borne trade is compared with that of airborne trade. Over the last decade, ocean-borne trade accounted for more than 99 percent of total foreign trade, whereas air-borne trade has represented less than one percent. No cargo movement was reported over land because South Korea does not trade directly with the communist regime of the North. Hence, the vital importance of SLOCs has never been debated in South Korea.”<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Davis, Malcolm, “Back of Course”, *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, January 19, 2001, page 5.

<sup>124</sup> “The Republic of Korea: Approaching the Millenium”, *Naval Forces*, 1999, page 24.

<sup>125</sup> Lee, Seo-Hang, “SLOC Security in Northeast Asia: Korean Navy’s Role” in *Korean Sea Power and the Pacific Era*, edited by Kim, Dalchoong and Cho, Doug-Woon, Institute of East and West Studies, Yonsei University, 1990, page 82.

Commercial trade routes connecting global trading hubs are susceptible to disruption without a maritime force capable of protecting the SLOCs. Denying strategic commodities could potentially strangle a coastal nation, especially South Korea. Lee Seo-Hang also claims that, "South Korea depends upon foreign sources to supply all or a large part of its needs of certain strategic goods: petroleum, petroleum products, and minerals. Korea imports nearly 100 percent of its annual petroleum requirements. Since it has no domestic petroleum products, South Korea is highly dependant upon foreign sources, mainly the Middle East and Southeast Asia."<sup>126</sup>

Specific threats to South Korean SLOCs include: (a) the offensive posture of the North Korean Navy; (b) the extended use of waters off the Korean peninsula, including the Korea Straits by the former Soviet Navy; and (c) a major military conflict or political crisis in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, which could threaten the closure of the Straits used for international navigation.<sup>127</sup>

South Korean national security objectives include a crucial role for the ROKN. Deterring war, easing tensions with North Korea and eventual unification of the Korean peninsula form a large part of South Korea's grand strategy. One obstacle for the Republic of Korea is the uneven distribution of its military budget. The ROK Army has been the primary beneficiary while the ROK Air Force and ROKN get what they can. The Republic of Korea, butted against hostile North Korea, can be considered an island state, similar to Japan. Virtually all trade in and out of South Korea originates via water. The importance of the ROK's vital sea-lanes have begun to receive high-level

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid, page 83.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, page 87.

importance. Now, the ROKN's role and emphasis is to secure the safety of its SLOCs. South Korea's relies on international trade which is important to further its economic progress.

The ROK is committed to protecting its SLOCs. Threat avoidance maintains SLOC safety, but also indicates a successful ROKN deterrence program. According to Lee Seo-Hang, "Deterrence of SLOCs attack can be of two kinds: general and specific. As to the general, the basic peacetime naval strategy for Korea should be an appropriate maintenance of an armed force of sufficient size and readiness to provide a credible deterrence against possible aggression. Specific deterrence against the offensive naval posture of the North requires the ROK to give top priority to the maintenance of a credible deterrent force."<sup>128</sup>

South Korea is engaged in territorial disputes directly involving the ROKN. Despite a bilateral fisheries agreement between South Korea and Japan, coupled with a 1999 joint maritime resource development program at Cheju-do, occasional sovereignty disputes over the Tokdo islets flare up.

The ROK conducts routine joint military exercises for training with the United States, and recently, Japan. Team Spirit, a major joint ROK-U.S. exercise began in 1976. Scenarios involve Korea-based U.S. forces, Pacific-area stationed U.S. forces, and the ROK military. North Korea perceives Team Spirit threatening and increases its security posture as a response. Due to increased tensions and possible hostilities, 1993 was the last Team Spirit exercise. South Korea trains annually in another major joint exercise, Ulchi

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid, page 93.

Focus Lens, which evaluates command readiness from command post perspectives. Combined Forces Command personnel and its components, including staffs, also use war-gaming computer simulations for an extensive command evaluation.

### **C. DPRK NAVAL LIMITATIONS**

According to a Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, "The DPRKN is principally a coastal force and is the country's least prioritized military arm. It consists of two fleets, the East Sea and Yellow Sea. The Yellow Sea Fleet includes 340 vessels in six combatant groups, and the East Sea Fleet consists of 470 vessels in 10 combatant groups. Once warships are allocated to the fleets, they do not change commands because of the problem of sailing around the ROK."<sup>129</sup>

DPRK naval forces stationed within North Korean territorial waters operate up to 50 nautical miles out to sea. The DPRK Navy has the largest operational midget submarine force in the world, which are allocated to special operations tasks, such as mine-laying, blocking sea lanes and landing commandos, supported by a variety of amphibious assault craft.<sup>130</sup>

The DPRK appears content with maintaining a coastal navy and not attempting to expand into a blue-water navy. Much emphasis on its ability to conduct a surprise attack against the ROK dictates maritime strategy. The naval armament structure comprises

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<sup>129</sup> "Navy, North Korea", *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – China and Northeast Asia*, Update 6, May 10, 2000, section 6.13.4

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, section 6.13.5

mainly of small boats, normally 200 tons or less. Ninety percent of these are coastal boats and landing craft, intended for infiltration operations and coastal defense.<sup>131</sup>

North Korea's fast-attack craft are vulnerable to extreme sea conditions and limited by range and endurance. Certainly capable of inflicting major damage at the onset of a surprise attack, these vessels, although roughly twenty-five percent are more than twenty years old, would be instrumental in the early phase of a surprise attack or war. Fast-attack craft combined with midget submarines, could interrupt the ROK sea-lanes of communications before the ROK could react.

In January 1993, Commander of U.S. Forces in Korea, General Robert RisCassi, stated the DPRKN increased the number of diesel-attack submarines by two from the previous year. "The DPRKN also continues to expand the number of missile-armed fast attack craft (PTGs) of the Soju (four SSMs) and So Hung (two SSMs) classes. The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency notes that the DPRKN's most capable weapon systems are 39 guided-missile patrol boats equipped with the SS-N-2A Styx anti-ship missile. Though their small size limits operations to coastal waters and calm sea, these high-speed boats can respond quickly to intruding vessels. The Styx missile has a minimum range of 25 nautical miles and carries radar or infra-red homing seekers."<sup>132</sup>

The DPKRN's headquarters appointments include Admiral Kim Il-Choi, Commander of the Navy; Vice Admiral Kim Yun-Sim, Deputy Commander; and Rear Admiral Kong Seng Ho, Chief of Staff. Major bases on the East Coast include, Toejo

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid, section 6.13.2

<sup>132</sup> Jacobs, Gordon. "The Korean People's Navy-Further Perspectives", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Vol. 005, Issue 007, July 1, 1993, page 316.

(headquarters); Mayang-do; Najin; and Cha-ho (submarines). Minor East coast bases include, Songjon Pando; Munchon-up; Mayang-do-ri; Mugye-po; Changjon; and Puam-Dong. Major West coast bases include, Nampo (headquarters); Pipa-got (submarines); and Sagon-ri. Minor West coast bases include Tasa-ri; Sohae-ri; Chodo; Sunwi-do; Pupo-ri; and Koampo. A number of bases include underground berthing facilities. Personnel estimates for 2000 are 46,000 Officers and men, and the DPRK has a 5-year national service requirement.

The strength of the DPRKN, according to Jane's Fighting Ships, 1999-2000 includes:

DPRK Naval Order of Battle

TYPE	ACTIVE
Submarines – Patrol	22
Submarines – Coastal	28
Submarines – Midget	40
Frigates	3
Corvettes	5
Patrol Forces	500+
Amphibious Forces	130
Hovercraft	135
Minesweepers	24
Depot Ships for Midget Submarines	8
Survey Vessels	4

**Table 4 DPRK Naval Order of Battle**

Submarines – Patrol

North Korea operates twenty-two Romeo Class submarines. Displacing 1,475 tons surfaced, and 1,830 tons while submerged, eighteen are stationed on the east coast and occasionally operate in the Sea of Japan. Limited to fast-attack roles, these submarines have virtually no anti-submarine potential or roles. Two diesel engines provide power and speeds up to 15 knots submerged are possible.

### Submarines – Coastal

Twenty-eight Sang-O Class submarines support North Korean coastal operations, including extensive infiltration operations. Small sized, these submarines measure 116.5 x 12.5 x 12.1 feet and displace 256 tons on the surface. Older Russian diesel generator coupled with a North Korean motor, attached to a shrouded propeller provide speeds up to 8.8 knots when submerged. These coastal submarines can carry two torpedoes, and some carry up to 16 mines.

According to an article in *Periscope*, “North Korean mini-sub activity in South Korean waters has resulted in the loss of one Sang-O class midget submarine which ran aground on September 17, 1997, while on a clandestine infiltration mission. Eleven North Korean spies were found dead, shot by their commander who also killed himself. The incident touched off a 53 day manhunt for 26 other agents that ended with 24 North Korean infiltrators and 13 South Koreans dead. One North Korean was captured and another was believed to have escaped.”<sup>133</sup>

### Submarines – Midget

Comprising the bulk of the North Korean submarine fleet, thirty-six Yugo and four P-4 Class midget submarines are supported by eight auxiliary ships. Displacing 90 tons surfaced, these midget submarines measure 65.6 x 10.2 x 15.1 feet and operate two diesel engines. Carrying a crew of four, plus six or seven divers, these midget submarines are instrumental in conducting covert missions against the Republic of Korea.

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<sup>133</sup> “North Korea Armed Forces Structure”, *Periscope*, April 2000. Available at <http://www.usaid.kiev.ua/index.html>

### Frigates

One Soho Class and two Najin Class frigates provide North Korea with its most capable and versatile naval platforms. Equipped with two diesel engines on the Soho Class, and three diesel engines on the Najin Class, maximum speeds are twenty-three and twenty-four knots respectively. Both carry missiles, guns, torpedoes, countermeasures, and are equipped with sonar. Both Najin frigates carry mines, but these ships seldom get underway. Only the Soho frigate has a helicopter platform. Although operational, Soho Class spend most of its time in port due to its poor design.<sup>134</sup>

### Corvettes

Similar to older Soviet Tral class minesweeper design, with the same silhouette. The bridge is located on the raised forecastle and supports a pole mast. There are two raised platforms forward and abaft the single funnel amidships; the aft platform supports a twin anti-aircraft gun mount. The 100-mm dual-purpose gun is mounted on the forecastle, forward of the bridge.<sup>135</sup>

Two diesel engines provide the main machinery for three North Korean built Sariwon and two former USSR built Tral Class corvettes. Guns, depth charges, and mines are standard equipment. Normal crew complement is 60 personnel, and these vessels measure 204 x 24 x 7.8 feet. Maximum speed is sixteen knots with a range of 2,700 miles.

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> "Sariwon Class", *Periscope*, February 2001. Available at <http://www.usaid.kiev.ua/index.html>



### Patrol Forces

North Korea's main maritime emphasis is firmly placed on its patrol forces. With over 500 vessels, these vessels are fast and lethal. Packing serious firepower, some patrol craft utilize the formidable SS-N-2A Styx surface-to-surface missile, whose range is 25 nautical miles with a 513 kilogram warhead. Many of North Korea's patrol craft were acquired by the former USSR in the late 1960s, and later between early 1970 to the middle of the 1980s.

According to *Periscope*, "The Soviet Union transferred 6 SO-1 Class anti-submarine craft to North Korea between 1957 and 1961. As many as 12 additional units were built to the same design in North Korea; these were given the NATO code name Soman class. The North Korean-built units are armed for general patrol duties, with no anti-submarine armament. Some reports indicate that some or all Soviet-built units have been modified to the North Korean configuration."<sup>136</sup>

Main machinery for the majority of these vessels are diesel engines, and carry a combination of torpedoes, missiles, mines, and guns. Speeds are in excess of 25 knots and stretch upwards to 40+ knots. Certainly a main player in the North Korean maritime strategy, each North Korean coast has an ample amount of patrol forces to keep South Korea in a defensive posture.

### Amphibious Forces

Ten Hantaek Class landing ships, capable of carrying 350 troops, ninety-five small assault landing craft capable of carrying 35 troops each, plus twenty-five LCMs capable

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<sup>136</sup> "Soman Class", *Periscope*, June 1992. Available at <http://www.usaid.kiev.ua/index.html>

of carrying 2 tanks or 300 troops each, constitute the brunt of the North Korean amphibious navy. Main machinery for all are supplied by diesel engines. According to Gordon Jacobs, amphibious forces are “a major component of the DPRKN’s offensive doctrine, one which supports the Special Purposes Forces, has traditionally been based on around 100 Nampo class high-speed LCPs, each capable of transporting 20-30 troops.”<sup>137</sup>

#### Hovercraft

Capable of carrying 50 special warfare commandos, North Korea’s 135 hovercraft are fast and outfitted with radar. Some hovercraft carry SS-N-2A Styx missiles, and easily factored in to play a dominant role in North Korea’s maritime strategy against South Korea.

#### Minesweepers

Twenty-four diesel powered coastal minesweepers, built in North Korea in the mid 1980s, provide the only maritime mine clearing asset for North Korea. Built after an old Soviet design, all were wooden constructed in North Korea. All minesweepers carry 37-mm/or two 25-mm guns for self-defense, a crew of 22, and can reach a maximum speed of 18 knots.

#### Depot Ships for Midget Submarines

Support for its midget submarine force is the role for eight North Korean depot ships. Ocean going, these vessels carry weapons and ammunition for the midget submarine forces.

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<sup>137</sup> Jacobs, Gordon, “The Korean People’s Navy – Further Perspectives”, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, Vol 005, Issue 007, July 1993, page 317.

## Survey Vessels

North Korea's Hydrographic Department officially has four survey vessels for oceanographic research and development purposes. These vessels range from 260 tons to 1,100 tons.

## **D. DPRK NAVAL REGIONAL/INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS**

The DPRKN consists mainly of a coastal defense structure. According to Chee Choung-II, "the North Korean navy appears to strive for interdicting the sea lanes of communication by denying South Korea an access to the sea routes which would provide for the necessary SLOC for the logistical supply and troop reinforcements. This task could be accomplished by eliminating the surface navy of South Korea and blockading South Korean ports and harbors by laying mines in South Korean harbors and ports."<sup>138</sup>

North Korea's naval assets firmly support the claim that coastal defense is its main strategy. The DPRK's military strategy against South Korea is based on a blitzkrieg for a short duration before any reinforcements could reach the Korean peninsula for the ROK-U.S. force.<sup>139</sup> Early wartime missions against South Korea are expected to support clandestine operations involving special forces. As of early 2001, the North Korean navy

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<sup>138</sup> Chee, Choung-II, "The Role of the Two Korea's Navy and Defense of the SLOC", in *Resources, Maritime Transport, and SLOC Security in the Asia-Pacific Region*, edited by Kim, Dalchoong, Institute of East and West Studies, Yonsei University, 1988, page 151.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, page 158.

is comprised of mostly small boats. More than ninety percent of these are coastal and landing boats, intended for infiltration operations and coastal defense.<sup>140</sup>

North Korea claims South Korea as its number one enemy. Despite peace talks and plans to conduct future talks, North Korea continues to train and prepare its naval forces for the unexpected as it did during the Cold War. According to J. Bouchard, “North Korean naval operations are directed primarily against South Korea. In August 1977, North Korea established a military exclusive zone extending 50 nautical miles from the coast, and an economic exclusive zone (EEZ) extending 200 nautical miles from the coast into the West Sea and the East Sea. Wartime naval missions on the part of North Korea include: coastal defense, infiltration of agents and commandos into South Korea, small-scale amphibious assaults and raids, interdiction of supplies and reinforcements to the South, and protection of coastal shipping and sea-borne supplies from China and the Soviet Union.”<sup>141</sup>

Submarines constitute the North Korean Navy’s greatest strength. Their diesel-electric submarines are ideally suited to operate in Korean waters and could inflict great damage to South Korea’s shipping in the early phase of a war. South Korea’s weak anti-submarine warfare forces render it highly vulnerable, although South Korea may rely heavily on U.S. anti-submarine efforts.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> “Navy, North Korea”, *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – China and Northeast Asia*, Update 6, May 10, 2000. Online at <http://www.usaid.kiev.ua/index.html>

<sup>141</sup> Bouchard, J. “The Korean Naval Balance”, *Proceedings*, March 1988. Quoted by Kim, Kook-Chin, “The Pacific Era and the Korean Maritime Security” in *Korean Sea Power and the Pacific Era*, edited by Kim, Dalchoong and Cho, Doug-Woon. Institute of East and West Studies, Yonsei University, 1990, page 55.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, page 56.

North Korea's navy plays no role in international commitments. Absent a naval expansion program, the DPRK's primary role for its Navy is coastal defense.

#### **E. SUMMARY**

The vast differences in the Korean navies' roles are stark and unique in character. South Korea is looking for solutions to enhance its SLOCs protection, while North Korea expresses no desire to expand its naval force into a blue-water navy and content with its quantitative and qualitative assets. North Korea has a quantitative and qualitative surprise-attack advantage over South Korea, but it seems to have put all its eggs in one basket. Coastal defense is North Korea's only game, but South Korea is slowly moving away from primarily focusing on coastal defense and toward blue-water capabilities, but only at a pace comparable to a slow crawl. The longer South Korea keeps a strict noose around the ROK Naval budget, the farther behind the Japanese Self-Defense Maritime Force it will find itself. South Korea cannot depend entirely on the United States – Japan alliance to safeguard South Korean SLOCs. It must be prepared to provide substantial assets to protect its national interests, and with each passing moment, an opportunity is lost if not seized.

The North Korean Navy's strength depends on a surprise-attack on South Korea. Utilizing their midget submarines, North Korea could effectively mine South Korean ports and harbors, and disrupt their vital ROK Sea Lanes of Communications. Concurrently introduce North Korean special force commandos via fast-attack patrol craft and midget submarines and South Korea would find itself in a serious predicament.

According to an article in *Naval Forces*, "The mission of the ROKN during peacetime is not only to deter war, but also protect national and maritime sovereignty,

and perform activities that support national foreign policies and enhance national prestige. Its mission during war is to guarantee the safety of activities at sea by protecting its SLOCs – the lifeline of the country – and by exercising control over the sea. At the same time, it must prevent enemy activities at sea, and carry out amphibious operations against the enemy's side and rear areas."<sup>143</sup>

South Korea is critically dependent on its SLOCs, and slowly improving naval assets to afford protection of its national interests. Modernizing the South Korean fleet is a time-consuming process, requiring a strategic long-term plan to ensure South Korea moves away from a coastal defense navy to a blue-water navy capable of performing a multitude of sustained naval operations. The new KDX-2 and 3 Class affords South Korea a maritime platform with increased firepower desperately needed, but harnessed by minimal budget spending and a lack of overwhelming public support.

Participating in international exercises drastically improves the quality of the ROK Navy. Exercises such as RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific), a maritime exercise of coalition forces from the U.S., Canada, Australia, Japan, Chile, and the ROK, develops cooperative ties. These exercises allow the ROKN to demonstrate its expertise and competence to countries around the Pacific. The ROKN participates in RIMPAC with surface vessels, submarines, and aircraft. The ROKN has been able to operate state-of-the-art weapon systems and to test new strategies and tactics.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> "The Republic of Korea: Approaching the Millennium", *Naval Forces*, 1999, page 25.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

The ROK's expansion programs are underway and according to Robert Karniol of Jane's Information Group, the "ROKN should begin operating with greater sophistication while moving with more confidence beyond the country's coastal areas through two programs recently launched."<sup>145</sup> The two programs he is referring to are the KDX 3 project and the three new Type 214 submarines under contract by a German shipyard.

The KDX 3 project would provide Seoul with its first phased-array radar-equipped destroyer, matching a maritime capability already established in Japan and ardently pursued by Taiwan.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Karniol, Robert. "Navy Sails Confidently Ahead", *Jane's Information Group Limited*, Volume 34, No. 25, December 2000. Available at <http://www.usaid.kiev.ua/index.html>

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

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## V. U.S.-ROK MARITIME ALLIANCE

### A. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ALLIANCE IF THE ROKN EXPANDS

The United States and South Korea have more than five decades of maintaining a political-military relationship responsible for peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. This relationship, nurtured as the Korean War ended, resulted in a series of mutual obligations and security commitments, which forged an alliance to prevent and deter aggression of any kind on the Korean peninsula. In addition, the United States maintained a military presence in South Korea since the Korean War, ready to defend the Republic of Korea should deterrence ever fail. The origins of the alliance are clearly from a past time, when South Korea was beginning its transition to democracy. Since then, the Republic of Korea has blossomed into a country with a robust economy, holding a respectable position in the international community, and a country capable of providing its own security.

Stability and security on the Korean Peninsula, byproducts of the United States-Republic of Korea security alliance, have not been fully challenged by the DPRK since the Korean War's truce. North Korea has miraculously managed to survive in its present condition that many Northeast Asia analysts consider potentially implosive, while the Republic of Korea dominates its foe in virtually every category. A 1992 joint project conducted by RAND and the Korea Institute of Defense Analyses (KIDA) observed that the common interests of the U.S. and the ROK include "(a) deterrence/defeat of North Korea, (b) prevention of North Korean nuclearization, (c) achieving a peaceful

reunification, (d) preventing the rise of a regional hegemon, and (e) maintaining regional stability.”<sup>147</sup>

As of early 2001, North Korea remains the number one threat to the U.S.-ROK alliance, providing the antagonistic thread woven by the two country’s security alliance tapestry. The majority of the U.S.-ROK security cooperation’s common interests are dominated by military considerations, but how much longer North Korea will remain the number one threat is uncertain. Moreover, one must remember that in the aftermath of 1989, the world witnessed remarkable international changes when the Soviet Union collapsed. The same sort of change could occur after a North Korean collapse. If the basis for the U.S.-ROK alliance disappears, what will form the basis for a continued U.S.-ROK alliance? Cultivating and updating this time-tested alliance to suit the challenging needs and situations of Northeast Asia will ensure that the alliance remains intact well into the future. Removing North Korea as the common denominator and replacing it with mutually beneficial goals and objectives for the United States and the Republic of Korea will ensure future peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

Naval cooperation between the United States and the ROK has evolved over time and served each other’s interests well. South Korea’s rapid economic development provided the wherewithal to support the ROKN’s transition from a coastal to a blue-water navy, and South Korea’s genuine interest in providing its own security, whether on land or at sea. Regardless, the ROK chooses to depend on the United States to provide protection for South Korea’s maritime interests. Readdressing the maritime

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<sup>147</sup> Pollack, Jonathon and Young Koo Cha, *A New Alliance for the Next Century: The Future of U.S.- Korean Security Cooperation*, RAND, 1995, page 15.

commitments and obligations of the U.S.-ROK security alliance will certainly provide areas that are outdated and earnestly deserve revision.

The U.S.-ROK maritime alliance provided South Korea with security through uncontested U.S. naval superiority. For the most part, if South Korea developed a submarine force capable of providing enhanced blue-water protection and deterrence, it would not depend entirely on the United States for these services. U.S. naval assets also provide aerial reconnaissance, and early warning as part of the U.S.-ROK maritime alliance, another facet of the U.S.-ROK security alliance.

The ROK's decision to expand its naval forces would likely be supported by the United States, and Japan as well. Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force is an example of what impact can be made once the public supports its military. If South Korea can, in the future, independently sustain security for its national interests, it does not necessarily mean it will discard its security alliance with the United States. Ties between the United State and the ROK have been strengthened by mutual respect and understanding of each other.

According to an article in *Naval Forces*, "Although the U.S.-ROK alliance is the foundation of the ROK's defense system, the country seeks cooperation economically and militarily with many countries, including Japan, China, and Russia plus those in Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Middle East."<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> "The Republic of Korea: Approaching the Millennium," *Naval Forces*, 1999, page 24.

The U.S.-ROK naval relationship is valued, and the idea of reducing or eliminating this alliance is unwarranted. What is warranted is reevaluating the division of labor and the future role of the ROKN as Korean unification looms in the future. Interoperability, defined differently by the 1992 conference sponsored by the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses and the Center for Naval Analyses, would improve the ROKN's transition to a blue-water navy. Conference attendees from the U.S. agreed interoperability meant "compatible command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence capability (C4I), but to the ROK attendees, it was defined as upgrading their platforms and weapon capabilities."<sup>149</sup>

Improved bilateral cooperation, before unification, is an important aspect of the U.S.-ROK maritime alliance. To this end, improving the alliance will include increased and technologically advanced military sales, meaningful joint operational exercises, increased host nation port access, and abundant personnel exchanges. Conducting joint training exercises, to include an even distribution of responsibilities, would greatly enhance bilateral cooperation. In addition, standardizing the conduct of exercises including communications, technologies, and tactics would greatly increase interoperability.

## **B. REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR ROKN EXPANSION**

South Korea is approaching naval modernization in a calm and unprovocative manner. The last thing the ROK wants is an arms race to develop in Northeast Asia. Slowly implementing change to its naval fleet is a prudent step for the ROK. North

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<sup>149</sup> Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, and the Center for Naval Analyses, "Prospects for U.S.-Korean Naval Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", 1995, page 4.

Korea's inability to recognize the ROK's legitimacy has created friction that continues to cause problems. Several major powers have security interests which converge at the Korean peninsula.

Major power security interests remain, despite a shift in the Northeast balance of power. Russia, China, and Japan all are proceeding with South Korean economic relations. Of these three powers, Russia provides the greatest potential for instability in Northeast Asia simply by its reduced political and military position, and its overwhelming internal conflicts. Unlike the Cold War era, Russia cannot guarantee stability to the Northeast Asia region until it restores stability to its politically and financially weakened country.

China, beneficiary of an incredible economic boom, favors becoming a central actor in Northeast Asia. According to Pollack and Cha, "China maintains ambitions to emerge as a true major power, which will entail the development of more-capable Chinese military forces in the twenty-first century – forces that are commensurate with its rapid political and economic development."<sup>150</sup>

China may aspire to become the powerhouse in Northeast Asia, without much resistance from Russia, and continues to exploit its economic relationship with South Korea. How China will respond to an expansive ROK Naval program is uncertain largely because China is still trying to manage the reins to its own internal programs. China may have dreams of becoming the regional powerhouse, but first must get its internal house in order. According to Richard Betts and Thomas Christensen, "China's growing power

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<sup>150</sup> Pollack, Jonathan and Cha, Young Koo, *A New Alliance for the Next Century: The Future of U.S.-Korean Security Cooperation*, RAND, 1995, page 17.

causes so many headaches, largely because its strategic implications are not fully clear.”<sup>151</sup>

Japan, compared to Russia and China, will likely contribute to regional stability as it has in the past. More than the other major powers in Northeast Asia, Japan will understand South Korea’s naval growing pains and potentially provide the blueprint for a successful South Korea maritime program. Japan, clearly superior in undersea capabilities, can independently provide protection for its strategically vital SLOCs, and serve in a mentor role to the South Korean naval officials.

South Korea is in a position to expand and build its naval forces to suit its requirements. North Korea is unable to challenge South Korea, except to wage a surprise attack that would result in a North Korean catastrophe. Still, South Korea struggles with the role of its navy. Deterring and providing defense against North Korean antagonistic maritime threat molds the ROKN to assume a defensive posture. It is time for the ROKN to choose when it will take offensive/defensive postures. Offensive postures include: projecting naval capabilities that include deterrence roles, protecting ports and inland waters through aggressive sea-denial tactics and strategies, and possessing strike platform capabilities vis-à-vis a well-balanced surface fleet. The ROKN must develop a force capable of conducting effective sea denial operations. These operations would involve combined hit-and-run tactics, covert attacks, offensive and defensive mining, and submarine coastal defense operations.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Betts, Richard and Christensen, Thomas, “China: Getting the Questions Right”, *The National Interest* – Winter 2000/01, page 29.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, page 12.

In addition, an increased level of U.S.-ROK naval cooperation must be handled delicately. If Japan were somehow involved, China and Russia might recoil and create an even more destabilizing environment. Despite this possible situation, a larger, more modern ROK Navy has the potential to contribute greatly to maintaining security on the Korean peninsula. Assuming more responsibility for its maritime security, the ROKN could, if a naval modernization program proved successful, undertake an offensive position vice its current defensive role. This is not to say a well equipped modern ROK Navy would prevent the DPRK from conducting a surprise attack on South Korea, only that the ROKN would be better equipped to absorb the North Korean blow and subsequently engage and eliminate North Korea with overwhelming firepower.

### **C. SUMMARY**

Modernizing the South Korean Navy will be an enormous financial undertaking for the ROK. The relative calm in Northeast Asia provides the ROK plenty of time to implement its program as regional powers limit their responses to the ROK's desire to provide greater maritime protection for its national interests.

Successful identification of common goals and objectives form the foundation of a future U.S.-ROK alliance. However, the amount of U.S. support for the ROKN expansion program before unification will probably be greater than that of a post-unified Korea. As of spring 2001, several joint U.S.-ROK vital interests linger from the Cold War period, specifically: deterring the North Korean threat, maintaining a nuclear-free Korean peninsula, and maintaining security and stability on the Korean peninsula. There is no doubt that the future U.S.-ROK alliance presents challenges and opportunities, but until a post-unified Korea's threats are ascertained, it is hard to predict what would form

the basis of the U.S.-ROK alliance. An efficient blue-water ROKN would greatly enhance Korean peninsular security, making the challenges mutually cost effective for the United States and the Republic of Korea. Increased bilateral relations support security interests of the United States and the Republic of Korea, but must also embrace possible shifting circumstances on the Korean peninsula.

Regional implications for ROK naval expansion are minimal, if handled with caution. Most Northeast Asia countries, except North Korea, understand and appreciate the idea of South Korean self-sufficiency and independence, and likely to support South Korea's vision of a naval force capable of protecting its national interests. Incorporating a modest approach, like the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force model vice unrealistic goals, i.e. building a carrier fleet, provides the ROK with the best opportunity to proceed with little resistance from the majority of its Northeast Asia neighbors.



## **VI. UNIFICATION AND THE ROK NAVY**

### **A. DYNAMICS AND POTENTIAL IMPACT OF UNIFICATION**

Korean unification will affect Northeast Asia militarily, economically, politically, and socially. This chapter assumes a peaceful unification but does not assume when this will occur. From a naval standpoint, a unified Korea will most likely have a navy comprised of predominantly newer South Korean vessels coupled with a collection of dilapidated North Korean vessels, many unfit for further naval service. Also assuming North Korea does not attempt to modernize its coastal navy, the bulk of naval requirements will be met with the existing South Korean fleet. Personnel integration will prove to be an administrative challenge, as trust and confidence will take time to develop between former adversaries.

South Korea is better prepared than North Korea to take the brunt of a North Korean collapse, but it will be painfully challenging incorporating 23 million North Korean people into a unified national system. Of these 23 million people, roughly 46,000 people worked in the latest version of the DPRKN, possessing naval experience, and would most likely desire to continue working in the unified maritime arrangement. The two North Korean fleets, scattered amongst 18 North Korean naval bases, would provide potential naval bases for the unified Korea. Nevertheless, the naval strength of this unification process would undoubtedly come from South Korea, whose home bases would serve as model bases for the unified navy.

A unified Korea would abut against China and Russia with water access deep into the West and East Sea. China and Russia might be wary of the new Korean system and want to assert their influence on what may be perceived as an impressionable new state.

A unified Korea's military strategy and its official policies can be established once national interests and security objectives are defined. A unified Korea could use its navy to ensure its national interests are protected. The role of a unified navy would be critical for unified Korea's survival.

Protecting the unified people and their resources would certainly form a part of Korea's grand strategy. Relationships with the four major powers: the United States, Japan, China, and Russia would be designed to ensure peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. Of course, there are numerous important tasks for the ROK navy before unification. Once unification is a reality, threats and issues to the unified country would breathe life into future alliance relationships.

The ROK Navy should proceed with its modernization program without hesitation. Once unification becomes a reality, money previously allocated by the ROK government for its naval programs may be severed in favor for more important societal issues, specifically unified civilian integration. It is possible, at this point, that ambitious Northeast Asian countries could exploit perceived weaknesses on the Korean peninsula if the unified Korea were unable to independently protect itself.

Taking advantage of the peace allows South Korea to make important decisions affecting its future. Certainly South Korean leaders estimate that in the long term, a unified Korea is possible. Preparing and planning for the inevitable is a deliberate and smart decision, and will pay dividends when needed most.

Assuming Seoul will control a unified Korea increases the opportunity for continued U.S. relations. On the other hand, if Pyongyang controlled unified Korea, South Korea's relations with the United States would probably cease to exist. Speculating

who controls what and the timeline's for unification is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is worth adding here that the United States will not invest in a future relationship with a unified Korea whose threats are unknown. Wedding an unseen bride may bring about more problems than the U.S. is interested in inheriting, and possibly damage other U.S. bilateral regional relationships.

According to Jane's Information Group, "The ROK's defense equipment requirements since 1995 have been in large part dictated by the needs of the force improvement program launched that year. That program was designed in the main to equip the ROK with a self-reliant defense capability for three-dimensional warfare, enabling it to deal with a range of post-reunification regional threats. The economic crisis of late 1997 halted this program. [...] because of the improvement in the ROK's economy, the government felt able in March 1999 to resurrect its military modernization plans."<sup>153</sup>

For the time being, the ROK has several maritime options to consider prior to unification: (a) continuing its naval modernization program with a focus on advancing its KDX program and developing a submarine force capable of independently providing all protection required for strategic and vitally important SLOCs; (b) modeling its naval forces after the successful Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Forces; (c) allocating a certain percentage of its gross domestic product directly toward the ROK naval modernization program; (d) capitalizing on its naval strengths and decommissioning naval assets deemed economic liabilities, thereby devoting manpower and attention

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<sup>153</sup> "South Korea: Defense Equipment Requirements", *Jane's Information Group Limited*, August 2000. Online at <http://usaid.kiev.ua/index.html>

toward programs geared to the future blue-water navy; and (e) taking advantage of the current U.S.-ROK alliance to get the maximum protection for its national objectives while supplying minimal assets, ultimately focusing more on its naval expansion program until, when the time is right, such dependence on the United States is no longer needed.

The ROK's modernization program (as of Spring 2001) is focused on the KDX program, an Aegis-type platform modeled on the Japanese Kongo class vessel. This technology will provide South Korea with assets capable of conducting multiple naval missions and ultimately a limited power projection role. South Korea needs some type of limited power projection capability, and the KDX program is the best option to meet these needs. Unfortunately, the ROK can afford only a few of these warships, but prudence dictates it is time to reconsider the number of ships to be acquired with the prospects of a unified Korea looming on the horizon.

## VII. CONCLUSION

South Korea resembles an island state. Surrounded by the East and West Sea, and sharing a border with North Korea vis-à-vis a demilitarized zone, South Korean national security is linked to the maritime environment. Vital resources use sea lanes of communications. The importance of maintaining security for South Korea's sea lanes is justification for expanding the existing ROK Navy into a fleet capable of sustained blue-water naval operations. The Republic of Korea's economy could crumble if the waterways ceased to allow transportation goods in and out of South Korean ports. A capable blue-water Navy could guarantee open sea lanes and enforce sovereignty against any seaborne invaders.

An expansive ROK naval modernization program will affect relations with fellow Northeast Asian countries. A Northeast Asia arms race is not the desired result of a swift transition from brown-water to blue-water South Korean Navy. By focusing on several key components, specifically the KDX and submarine program, the ROKN is moving in the right direction. Both of these important programs greatly increase and enhance a limited ROK power projection role, while providing necessary protection for key national interests.

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