

# **The ROK Army's Role When North Korea Collapses Without a War with the ROK**

**A Monograph  
by  
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**First Term AY 00-01**

# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved OMB No.  
0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 01-02-2001	2. REPORT TYPE monograph	3. DATES COVERED (FROM - TO) xx-08-2000 to xx-02-2001
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4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The ROK Army's Role When North Korea Collapses Without a War with the ROK Unclassified	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S) Ryoo, Moo Bong ; Author	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS U.S. Army Command & General Staff College School of Advanced Military Studies 1 Reynolds Ave. Fort Leavenworth, KS66027	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
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9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME AND ADDRESS ,	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT  
APUBLIC RELEASE  
,

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT  
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15. SUBJECT TERMS  
North Korea; Republic of Korea

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:	17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 60	19. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Burgess, Ed burgesse@leavenworth.army.mil
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a. REPORT Unclassified	b. ABSTRACT Unclassified	c. THIS PAGE Unclassified	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER International Area Code Area Code Telephone Number 913758-3171 DSN 585-3171
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	ii
ABSTRACT .....	iii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
THE COLLAPSE AND THE UNIFICATION SCENARIOS .....	6
Current situation .....	6
Scenarios for North Korea’s future .....	15
The Unification Scenarios .....	22
STRATEGIC INTEREST OF MAJOR PLAYERS .....	28
United States .....	28
Japan .....	31
China .....	34
Russia .....	35
Republic of Korea .....	37
POSSIBLE COAs FOR SASO .....	41
CONCLUSION .....	46
APPENDIX .....	48
The ROK Army’s key tasks .....	48
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	53

## **ABSTRACT**

**THE ROK ARMY'S ROLE WHEN NORTH KOREA COLLAPSES WITHOUT A WAR WITH THE ROK** by MAJOR Moo Bong, RYOO, ROKA, # 47.

This monograph examines the possibility of North Korea's collapse and course of action for a stability and support operation to deal with the collapse.

North Korea seems fairly stable in terms of political, socio-ideological, military and diplomatic perspectives. However, the country needs to improve its economy to survive for an extended period. The only ways it can improve its economy is to open borders and engage with the rest of the world. North Korea also needs to do substantial market oriented reform to attract investment from outside and to encourage its people to work. The recent activities of the North, including the June 2000 summit can be understood in this regard. However, it will be facing the danger of exposing its people to information that is the most critical vulnerability of the regime. The collapse and subsequent stability and support operations is still possible.

When the North collapses, the strategic interests of the world's major powers are centered around the stability and economic prosperity of Korea. They all want to get access to the new markets while don't want instability due to massive migration, spill over violence, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The best course of action to deal with the collapse of North Korea is the ROK Army to lead the multinational and interagency stability operation and support operation. The collapse and unification can happen much faster than expected. Once begun, there will be not much time to prepare. The ROK Army needs to be prepared to lead the stability and support operation in coordinate with the major powers to deal with North Korea's collapse. It must seize the initiative for unification while minimizing foreign intervention to prevent the repetition of the unpleasant history of the UN protectorate from happening.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

*The expert had it wrong. Only months prior to the collapse of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the leading experts on Germany were writing that the question of Germany could no longer be one of reunification, but rather was one of the nature on the relationship between the two German states and the impact of that relationship on East-West stability and European Security.<sup>1</sup>*

—John Edwin Mroz

The popular opinion that the collapse of North Korea will result in the absorption of the North by the Republic of Korea (ROK) has waned since the historic South and North Korean summit, held 12-15 June 2000. The two leaders decided to resolve the question of reunification through joint efforts.<sup>2</sup> The inter-Korean exchange has increased dramatically since then. The current unification policy of the ROK also officially denounces any attempt to absorb North Korea.<sup>3</sup> It seems that the possibility of the collapse of North Korea, and subsequent absorption of North Korea by the ROK has disappeared.

However, North Korea has experienced a decade of economic decline that has claimed as much as ten percent of the pre-crisis population.<sup>4</sup> Due to its economic

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<sup>1</sup> John Edwin Mroz from the book *Unifying Germany : 1989-1990* by Gortemaker Manfred. (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, Inc. 1994), vii.

<sup>2</sup> Joint Press Corps, *Two Leaders Discuss Reconciliation*; available from [http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/site/data/html\\_dir/2000/06/15/200006150023.asp](http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/site/data/html_dir/2000/06/15/200006150023.asp); Internet; accessed 6/17/2000.

<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Unification, *North Korea Policy of the Kim Dae-Jung Administration*; available from <http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eg/load/C31/C315.htm>; Internet; accessed 10/05/2000.

<sup>4</sup> Marcus Noland, *The Summit and the Economic Future of the Korean Peninsula*; available from <http://www.iie.com/TESTIMONY/kosummit.htm>; Internet; accessed 7/28/2000.

difficulty, many experts estimated that North Korea is on the verge of collapse.<sup>5</sup> To avoid such collapse, the North Korean regime has made great efforts to attain hard currency. Initiatives include the establishment of a special economic zone, the Mt. Kumgang tourism project and sales of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Internationally, the North has established diplomatic relationships with selected western countries. North Korea also started to send its delegation to international organizations such as the Asian Regional Forum (ARF) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). While these efforts may bring economic benefits to the North, it will also expose her people to world influence. This could have serious internal political implications to North Korea.

It is expected that there will be tremendous suffering as well as increased instability before and after the collapse of North Korea. The entire Korean peninsula as well as surrounding states will be in further turmoil if massive migration of the North Korean people and arms in the North are not properly controlled. Extensive stability operations as well as significant support operations will be required to stabilize the situation.

Despite this, there are considerable postulations about multinational forces conducting SASO to control the turmoil when the North Korean regime collapses. Additionally, the ROK Army's role has not yet been defined, however it is obvious that the ROK will play the major role in the unification process. The question that must be asked is: When multinational SASO is required, will the ROK Army serve as the main effort during this critical time period if North Korea collapse without war with ROK? Alternatively, is it better for the ROK Army to serve as the supporting role for the

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<sup>5</sup> Robert A. Manning, "The Enigma of the North," *The Wilson Quarterly* 23, 3 (Summer 1999), 72-80.

SASO? The fundamental purpose of this paper is to examine the potential scenario of the North Korean collapse, to explore possible COAs to deal with such collapse and to recommend a possible response for the ROK Army.

This paper is organized into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the potential problem of a North Korean collapse and outlines the subsequent chapters. The second chapter assesses the North's current situation and examines possible scenarios for North Korea's future and reunification. The current situation of the North will be assessed in terms of political, economic, military, socio-ideological and diplomatic.

Based on the current assessment, possible scenarios for North Korea's future and indicators that support each scenario will be discussed. Four broad scenarios are possible. First, the North Korean regime is able to maintain the status quo and the regime continues to remain in power. It currently has political, military and socio-ideological stability. The economy seems to be improving. The international community has been providing aid and has started to open diplomatic relationships. Secondly, the North Korean leadership could decide to launch a desperate offensive operation against the ROK in the hope of achieving a decisive victory within a short time. It will cause tremendous casualties and destruction to both sides. Third, the North Korean government is not able to provide for the people's basic needs and they will lose control, which will lead to complete collapse of the regime. In this case, North Koreans are likely to flee South as well as to China and Russia in search of security and food. SASO may be required to stabilize the situation. The last scenario is that the North Korean regime stays in power, but decides to seek unification with the ROK due to the realization that it is the only way to survive.

Next, the possible reunification scenarios will be examined. Three broad scenarios are possible. The first scenario is unification through gradual integration. The current ROK government unification policy represents this scenario very well by stressing the three phase strategies for unification. The second scenario is unification through absorption following the North's collapse. This is the most difficult case to define who is going to play what role. The third scenario is unification through conflict. This is the most destructive scenario, but the easiest scenario to define the player's roles because it will be post-hostility operations by the winner.

The third chapter examines the interests of the major regional powers during and after Korean reunification. The Korean peninsula is where the strategic interests of the major powers, Japan, China, Russia and the United States intersect. Historically, they have been content to gain dominance or to prevent dominance by any one of the nations. They are responsible for the division of Korea in one way or the other. Would they try to promote or to hinder the reunification? Although each country has a unique relationship with the two Koreas and different interests, their interests revolve around maintaining regional stability and economic prosperity while preventing dominance by any single power.

In the fourth chapter, possible courses of actions (COAs) for SASO will be addressed. Two COAs will be developed: a SASO lead by the ROK Army and a SASO led by United Nations (UN). The two COAs will be compared to determine the better COA in stabilizing and setting the conditions for reunification.



The last chapter concludes with a recommendation to the ROK Army to plan for possible SASO when the North collapses without fighting. The recommendation entails the ROK seizing the initiative for unification.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE COLLAPSE AND THE UNIFICATION SCENARIOS

*Catastrophes seem to hit suddenly, but in reality the way has been prepared for them. Unperceived forces gradually eat away at the supports necessary for favorable development until the system is finally unable to resist any longer and collapse.*

Dietrich Dorner, *The Logic of Failure*<sup>6</sup>

One can only see the tip of an iceberg. A good sailor can estimate the underwater part of an iceberg, and avoid the danger of collision by turning his ship in advance. When there is no other way to avoid the impending collision, he takes every measure to minimize the damage. In the same way, the current indicators show just the tip of North Korea's future. Some indicate that North Korea may survive, while others indicate it may collapse. The possible scenarios for the North Korean future will be examined in this chapter. It starts with an estimate of North Korea's current situation, discusses its future, and outlines indicators that support the scenario. The chapter concludes with the discussion of possible unification scenarios.

#### Current situation

The current situation on the Korean peninsula is quite contradictory. On one hand, North Korea has been actively engaging with its neighboring countries since the June summit. The developments between the ROK and North Korea include family reunions, cabinet and action officer-level talks, a rail and road connection agreement, cultural exchanges, and the use of the same flag at the Sydney Olympics. The ROK agreed to

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<sup>6</sup> Dietrich Dorner, *The Logic of Failure*, trans. Rita and Robert Kimber, (New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 38.

provide 500,000 tons of food aid to North Korea during the third cabinet level talks.<sup>7</sup> The two Koreas also held defense minister talks in September 2000. North Korea has expanded its relations with other countries including Italy, Canada, England, and Germany. For the first time, North Korea sent its Vice Chairman of the National Defense Commission, Jo Myong-rok, to Washington to speak with the United States leadership in October 2000. In return, the US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, visited Pyongyang and discussed the potential for President Bill Clinton's visit to Pyongyang.<sup>8</sup> Other talks between the US and North Korea are taking place.

On the other hand, tension on the peninsula remains high with a force of half a million service members, with seventy percent of the units deployed at the front on both sides of the demilitarized zone.<sup>9</sup> North Korea has also been developing strategic arms such as nuclear and biochemical weapons and mid to long range missiles. North Korea has produced and deployed Scud-Cs with a range of 500 km and Rodong-1 missiles ranging 1300 km. It is also estimated to have the capability of developing 2000 to 6700 km range Tapodong-1 and Tapodong-2 missiles.<sup>10</sup> This summer, the North Korean Army conducted the largest training event in ten years.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Associate Press, "South Korea to send Grain to North", *Washington Post*, September 29, 2000, p.26; available from <http://ebird.dtic.mil/sep2000/e20000929south.htm>; Internet; accessed 9/29/2000.

<sup>8</sup> Jane Perlez, "Albright Receives a Spectacular Welcome to North Korea", *New York Times*, October 24, 2000, p.1; available from <http://ebird.dtic.mil/oct2000/e20001024receives.htm>; Internet; accessed 10/25/2000

<sup>9</sup> Darrell Hugh Zemitis, *The Future of North Korea: Scenarios and Implications for the United States Army*, (Berkeley, CA, UC Berkeley, 2000), 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> The Ministry of National Defense, *Defense White Paper*, the Republic of Korea (Seoul, Korea: Ministry of National Defense, 1999), 57-58.

<sup>11</sup> Yongwon, Yoo, *North Korea Conducted Largest Scale Training in Ten Years*; available from <http://www.chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200011/200011070620.html>; Internet; accessed 11/23/2000.

What does this mean? It might only be the tip of the iceberg. It is necessary to examine the real driving forces behind all these activities to find out the submerged part of the iceberg. The current situation will be examined in terms of economical, political, military, sociological, and diplomatic perspectives.

Economically, North Korea has experienced continuous negative growth since 1990. As a functioning national economy, it has already collapsed and, without some major restructuring, it cannot be made viable in any sustained fashion. There are several factors contributing to its economic crisis. First, North Korea has experienced trade shock caused by the sudden collapse of Soviet bloc markets and aid programs. Russia and China started to demand hard currency for trade. This created problems for North Korea, as it did not have the capability to produce quality goods that could generate hard currency. Second, it has been suffering from food shortages. North Korea was hit with a succession of floods, typhoons and a drought, which resulted in the worst food shortage in decades. It has suffered 1.5 million tons of annual grain shortages, roughly a third of North Korean requirement since 1995. It is estimated that the famine has claimed the lives of ten percent of the pre-crisis population while tens of thousands of citizens living in the northern part of North Korea escaped to China in search of food.<sup>12</sup> Faced with the breakdown of its national food distribution system, the regime has accepted the existence of farmer's markets. Estimates indicate that the farmer's markets provide roughly 60-70 percent of the food supply to the people.<sup>13</sup> Third, despite their economic difficulties, North Korea continues to maintain high military readiness, accounting for over 30

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<sup>12</sup> Noland, *The Summit*.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Natisios, *The Politics of Famine in North Korea*; available from <http://usip.org/oc/sr/sr990802/sr990802.html>; Internet; accessed 8/10/ 2000.

percent of its fiscal spending.<sup>14</sup> These factors closely affect each other and have made North Korea's economy worse.

North Korea does not have money and technology, but enjoys an abundant and cheap labor force. Therefore, the only path the North can use to improve its economy is by opening its borders to utilize the labor resources. By doing so, it can attract foreign investment, learn technology from others, and expand foreign trade. China and Vietnam, Asia's two other communist countries, set the example in this regard by opening their borders. The ROK and the US, with others, have joined to try to find ways to help North Korea solve its dilemma, particularly its humanitarian crisis.<sup>15</sup> The easing UN sanctions will remove certain commercial and financial roadblocks. It seems that the North Korean leaders understand this and have undertaken some experimental changes. These changes include the opening of Rajin-Sonbong special economic zone, the Mt. Kumgang tourism project, and the possible further establishment of new special economic zones in the vicinity of Haeju, Nampo, and Wonsong. These attempts have brought economic benefits to North Korea. For example, the Hyundai Corporation is expected to pay 940 million dollars by 2005 to North Korea for the Mt. Kumgang Tourism project.<sup>16</sup> Recent reports suggest that North Korea is coming out of the bottom of the curve.<sup>17</sup> However, the North Korean regime can not expand the opening very fast. It is unlikely that the North Korean

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<sup>14</sup> The Ministry of National Defense, 48.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen W. Bosworth., *The Role of the United States in the Peace of Korea*, Speech at Heungsadan (November 15, 1999) ; available from <http://www.usembassy.state.gov/seoul/wwwh4488.html> ; Internet; accessed 7/15/2000.

<sup>16</sup> Countrywatch, *North Korea Economy*; available from [http://www.countrywatch.com/files/091/cw\\_topic.asp?vcountry=091&TP=ECO](http://www.countrywatch.com/files/091/cw_topic.asp?vcountry=091&TP=ECO); Internet; accessed 10/20/2000.

leadership can take these reform efforts to a full market oriented economy. Rather it has been trying to isolate the opening from its people to prevent information infiltration.

Politically, Kim Jong-il has made every effort to consolidate power. The foundation of his political power comes from unwavering military support.<sup>18</sup> In the name of the so-called military-first policies, he gave priority to the military in allocating its resources including food and fuel. He also brought many army generals to the center stage of politics. One hundred army generals were elected as deputies to the Seventh Supreme People's Assembly in July 1998, which is almost double of 57 for the previous session. He also replaced 21 out of the entire 31 cabinet ministries, and 64 percent of a total of 687 seats at the Supreme People's Assembly.<sup>19</sup> Kim was elected as chairman of the Defense Committee, a de facto top position in the nation, at the 9th People's Supreme Assembly in September 1998. He is ruling North Korea as the Chairman of the Defense Committee, not as the head of state.<sup>20</sup> His deceased father Kim Il-sung still retains the head of state position. He relegated many old generation politicians who were favored by his father Kim Il-sung including Vice Presidents Kim Yong-ju and Park Song-chol to nominal posts to consolidate his power. He has executed many high-ranking officials, including Secretary for Agricultural Affairs, So Kwan-hui, in public in Pyongyang in September 1997.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., In 1999, the North Korean economy recorded 6.2 percent growth.

<sup>18</sup> Patrick L. Noky, *The View From Pyongyang Prospects for Survival in the 21st Century*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 2000), 2.

<sup>19</sup> Won-ki, Choi, *The Inter-Korea Summit: What Lies Beneath*, available from <http://www.kimsoft.com/2000/wonki.htm>; Internet; accessed 8/18/2000.

<sup>20</sup> Zemitis, 20.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Militarily, North Korea has been pursuing an independent war execution capability under the Four Point Military Guidelines, which was adopted in 1962. The Guidelines are designed to instill cadre potential in every soldier, modernize the entire military, arm the entire people, and turn the whole territory into a fortress.<sup>22</sup> The North Korean Government made a public announcement during the military anniversary in April 1993 that it had been fully prepared for war.<sup>23</sup> North Korea even threatened the ROK that it would make Seoul into a “sea of fire” which was not just bluff.<sup>24</sup> It deployed 70 % of its combat power within 100 miles range from the Demilitarized Zone, which allows him to initiate a surprise attack without a major unit movement. It has also developed and produced large amounts of biological and chemical weapons. In addition, North Korea continues to develop nuclear weapons and missile technology and export it to Middle East countries. This has provided the leverage for the regime in dealing with ROK, Japan and US. The 1994 "Agreed Framework" is an example, signed by neighboring countries because Pyongyang was poised to amass an arsenal of nuclear weapons. In exchange for an ostensible freeze on that program, North Korea would receive half a million tons of free oil a year. In addition, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), an international consortium was organized to construct two light-water nuclear reactors for North Korea.

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<sup>22</sup> The Ministry of National Defense, 46. It was adopted as Korean Worker’s Party regulation at the fifth plenary meeting of the fourth Korean Worker’s Party Central Committee in December 1962. Article 60, Chapter 4 (Defense) of the Socialist Constitution revised on April 9, 1992 justifies the Four Point Military Guidelines, and the constitution revised in 1998 also specifies the same guidelines.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>24</sup> Manning.

Socio-ideologically, most of the North Koreans have been denied access to outside world information. The North Korean regime has continued to indoctrinate the cult worship of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, as a god-like being. They believe that honoring and worshipping Kim Jong-il is the only purpose of their life. They believe that their quality of life is better than that of the South Korean's because their dear leader provides the daily necessities. North Koreans will do whatever he orders them to do. In addition, the North Korean regime has continued to investigate and update its people's Songbun, or class background. The Songbun is determined by not only one's own behavior, but also one's pre-Revolutionary class status, the behavior of one's parents or relative. The Songbun dominates every aspect of life in North Korea. It is easy to be downgraded of one's Songbun, but it's almost impossible to improve one's Songbun.<sup>25</sup> Therefore North Koreans behave very carefully in order not to downgrade their Songbun, which contributes to stability.

Diplomatically, North Koreans have made skillful use of not only military threats but also the famine for their benefit. They rejected many proposals for peace made either by the ROK or by the US, while accepting only when food or aid packages were on the meeting table.<sup>26</sup> For example, the US offered 300,000 tons of food aid to have talks with North Korea when they launched a missile over Japan on 31 August 1998, and the former offered another 600,000 tons of food to get consent from North Korea to inspect the suspected site. The US inspection team visited the construction site in late May 1999, without any results. Pyongyang has tried to use its nuclear weapons program as leverage

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<sup>25</sup>Helen Louis Hunter, *Kim Il-song's North Korea*, Westport, CT, Praeger Publishers, 1999, 3-13.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



for economic and political engagement with the United States, South Korea and Japan. Kim Il-sung who had skillfully played his Chinese and Soviet allies against each other for several decades—launched a strategic campaign aimed at turning an adversary into an asset. Kim saw the agreement as a route to more economic aid, trade, and investment.<sup>27</sup> By extracting resources from the international community through military blackmail and the humanitarian plea for a starving population, the leadership hopes to stave off the dreaded specters of "reform" and "opening".

North Korea changed its policy from isolation to engagement beginning with the South-North summit. Recently, North Korea has been actively engaged not only with the ROK but also western countries including Canada, Italy, Great Britain, Germany. The British and Germans announced that they would open diplomatic relationships with North Korea for the first time since the Korean War. Why did the North Korean regime decide to engage with the ROK? The primary reason that the North accepted the summit can be explained in terms of Kim Jong-il's need. According to Juche ideology, only Kim Il-sung can issue guidance. Kim Il-sung still has dominant influence in the every aspect of North Korean life. Kim Jong-il has used his father's legacy to consolidate power. In the long run, however, Kim Jong-il needs to cope with his father's influence to set himself as the only leader in North Korea by showing his leadership capability of revitalizing the economy and dealing with western countries, which his father could not do. To show his leadership capability, he continues to develop the weapons of mass destruction. The weapons of mass destruction have provided him the financial and political lifeline. He could extract huge amounts of food, money from west by

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

threatening them. However, he could not completely depend on blackmail forever to feed his people and to get hard currency for the survival of his regime. He needed to have legal ways to get his economy going. His survival depends on a major change in its economy, and yet the resources to carry out such a restructuring can only be obtained through the involvement of outsiders such as ROK, US, Japan, and Europe.<sup>28</sup> The summit was the only and fastest path he could take to get resources. The summit with the President of the ROK can be justified internally as the fulfillment of the Great Leader Kim Il-sung's plan.<sup>29</sup> In addition, Kim Jong-il could improve his image overseas as a dictator who is pushing missile projects while the population is starving to death.

In summary, Kim Jong-il's paramount goal is to survive while taking the least possible risk of undermining itself at home. He has achieved fairly stable conditions in terms of political, military, and socio-ideological aspects. However, North Korea still faces extreme economic difficulties. The only way the North can improve its economy is opening its borders and engaging with the rest of the world. The first step it needed to take to engage with the world was the June summit. How much Kim Jong-il understands the implication of economic development and an open-door policy is not known. He may return to the old brinkmanship diplomacy using nuclear and missile threats if he estimates that the political effect and the economic gain are smaller than what he expected.

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<sup>28</sup> Bosworth.

<sup>29</sup> A summit between former ROK President Kim Young Sam and Kim Il-sung was undertaken at the time of Kim Il-sung's death in 1994.

## Scenarios for North Korea's future

Regarding scenarios for the North Korean future, the possibility of collapse is labeled by experts as a “hard landing or soft landing.”<sup>30</sup> The landing scenario presupposes that North Korea will collapse in one way or the other. To avoid such a prejudice, and include all the possibilities, the following four broad scenarios are developed in this research. Those scenarios are;

- Maintaining status quo
- Launching a desperate attack against South Korea to divert internal problems
- Collapsing completely without attacking South Korea
- Seeking unification with the ROK peacefully.

First, North Korea may be able to maintain the status quo. Despite many experts prediction that North Korea would collapse in the near future, North Korea has muddled through the last decade. Politically, Kim Jong-il has consolidated his power since early 1980 with his election to high party position at the Sixth Worker's Party congress. As it has been discussed earlier, he enjoys unwavering military support.<sup>31</sup> Socio-ideologically, Kim Jong-il continues to enhance and perpetuate the cult worship of his deceased father. The indoctrination efforts have provided the ideological framework to keep the people under control. Currently no other single person or group exists to challenge Kim in North

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<sup>30</sup> The definition of “hard landing” is the inability of the regime in power to maintain effective political, economic, social, and military control, ultimately leading to the dissolution of the regime and, in the extreme case, the state. The “soft landing” represents a process whereby gradual and controlled implementation of selective economic reforms enables a command economy to assume some characteristics of a market economy, although no regime change occurs. Polack D. Jonathan and Lee, Chung Min, "Preparing for Korean Unification Scenarios and Implication," (Washington D.C.: RAND, 1999), 40; Thomas B.Grewe, “Forging a Path to Peace and Stability on the Korean Peninsula: Implication and Recommendation for US Foreign Policy”, (Monterey, CA, Naval Postgraduate School, 1999), 12-26.

<sup>31</sup> Manning.

Korea.<sup>32</sup> Economically, even though North Korea has suffered from food shortages, there is no necessary connection between food and political stability. Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward caused millions to starve, but he used it as the opportunity to strengthen his power. The food crisis may rather bolster Kim Jong-il's regime to consolidate power by starving its potential domestic enemies.<sup>33</sup> Diplomatically, North Korea is also rapidly establishing relationships with western countries while improving relationships with Russia. Major powers continue to appease and protect North Korea from collapse. As long as international policy makers conceptualize the Korean peninsula within a two-state framework, they are expected to continue to do so.<sup>34</sup> The summit between President Kim Dae-jung and Chairman Kim Jong-il opened the door for serious infrastructure and business investment to reconstruct North Korea. How quickly those investments will flow depend in some measure at the North's willingness and ability to prepare the ground to accept it.<sup>35</sup>

The North will survive and may coexist with the ROK for an extended period of time if it receives continued support from major powers that want to pay the cost to maintain the status quo on the Korean peninsula and is able to contain the unwanted destabilizing effects of exposing its people to the outside. The Korean peninsula will remain in an unstable situation of not war but not peace. If the North loses one of these, the situation

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<sup>32</sup> Noky, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Manning.

<sup>34</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt, "The End of North Korea," *The International Economy* (Washington, DC:Jan/Feb 2000), 53.

<sup>35</sup> Stephen W. Bosworth, *After the Summit: American Policy towards Korea*; available from <http://usembassy.state.gov/seoul/www4497.html> ; Internet; accessed 8/25/2000.

will rapidly developed into a second or third scenario. The ROK Army in the framework of ROK-US alliance needs to maintain a high status of readiness to respond to this scenario.

Second, North Korea launches a desperate offensive operation against the ROK in order to divert internal problems and to achieve its goal for unification. From the very beginning, "the liberation of the South under communist rule " has been a supreme goal of North Korea. Consequently, it has prepared to attack the ROK using every means at its disposal.<sup>36</sup> The surprise attack against the South on June 25, 1950, was a first attempt to unify the Korean Peninsula under communist rule. If there were no UN intervention it surely would have succeeded. There is no indication or statement that the North has changed the goal. As discussed earlier, North Korea has prepared for a war since 1962 under the Four Point Guideline. The military remains loyal to Kim Jong-il. Kim said to ROK newspaper executives that "my power comes from the military."<sup>37</sup> However, North Korea is not able to provide spare parts necessary to operate the current equipment. Its equipment is rapidly becoming obsolete while the ROK-US forces continue modernizing.<sup>38</sup> The gap will grow wider as time goes on. North Korea is also critically inferior to the ROK-US alliance in the area of intelligence, air power, and industrial potential as seen during the Gulf War. Kim Jong-il understands he has a very narrow window of opportunity to wage a war and possibly win the war. North Korea's military strategy is achieving decisive victory before the US reinforcements could arrive in the

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<sup>36</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt, "The End of North Korea," *The International Economy* (Washington, DC) 14, 1 (Jan/Feb 2000): 50-53.

<sup>37</sup> Doug and Mufson Struck, Steven, "North Korea's Kim Sheds Madman Image," *Washington Post*; available from <http://ebird.dtic.mil/oct2000/e20001026sheds.htm>., Internet; accessed 10/26/2000.

<sup>38</sup> Noky, 6-7.

peninsula.<sup>39</sup> It will launch simultaneous surprise attacks in the forward and rear area using all available assets at its disposal to create panic in the South in the early stage of war. It will then try to advance rapidly with mechanized forces and special operations forces before the UN and allied nations intervene. Considering the capability of ROK-US Combined Forces Command (CFC), it may not try to achieve complete unification. It may try to achieve very limited political objectives to leverage its survival. To this end, it has developed and deployed mechanized forces in the forward area.<sup>40</sup> It continues to conduct training, and denies talk with the ROK on the issue of tension reduction measures. North Korea continues to insist on abolishing the ROK National Intelligence Service and the National Security Law to undermine the ROK's defense capability under the name of nationalism. Diplomatically, the recent North Korean diplomatic activities can be analyzed as deception operations to deceive its intention, as they did just before the Korean War in 1950. Kim Jong-il's regime has been trying to drive wedges between the US and Korea and Japan. As ambassador Bosworth mentioned, North Korea has tried to reach a separate agreement with the US on weapons of mass destruction and their delivery system which would then create a normal relationship between the US and North Korea at the expense of the Republic of Korea.<sup>41</sup> If North Korea reaches a separate peace agreement, they will launch a propaganda program to achieve its goal of complete withdrawal of US Forces from the Korean Peninsula by claiming that the US forces are

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<sup>39</sup> The Ministry of National Defense, 47.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Bosworth. *The Role of the United States*.

not needed.<sup>42</sup> North Korea regards US forces in Korea as the greatest barrier for a war.<sup>43</sup> This scenario will cause tremendous casualties and destruction. However, the ROK-US CFC has been prepared for this scenario for the last five decades, and they will counter the North's aggression very effectively. The North will hasten its collapse if they choose to do so.

Third scenario is the complete collapse of North Korea without attacking the ROK. The North Korean government is not able to provide the peoples basic needs thus loosing control, resulting in the complete collapse of the North Korean regime. As it had been discussed earlier, international support, internal control and military backup were the key factors that allowed North Korea to survive through its economic difficulty. In fact, those three are the strength of the regime and weakness at the same time. Therefore, if any one of points is weakened, it will face danger of collapse.

North Korea's economy has virtually ceased to function, after ten years of negative economic grow. North Korea's food crisis can not be solved in one or two years. The crisis is not just from a one time flood or drought, rather it is from a systemic and structural failure. North Korea has applied the Juche (self-reliance) ideology in every aspect of life. It has applied the Juche method to the agricultural area. The Juche methodology directed the North Korean populace to cultivate and terrace its marginal land, and to apply fertilizer excessively, which caused deforestation and soil erosion. In turn, it contributed to a series of flood and droughts. Despite its juche ideology, it could survive by receiving extensive amounts of external support. Nicholas Eberstadt wrote

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<sup>42</sup> Jong-ho, Yoon, *North Korea Again Request the US Withdrawal*; available from <http://chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200009/200009290021.html>; Internet; accessed 11/20/2000.

<sup>43</sup> The Ministry of National Defense, 47.

that North Korea, which exemplifies so many of the tragic, destructive, and unworkable political practices of the last century, is a colossal failure.<sup>44</sup> North Korea has acquired hard currency by selling overflight rights to its airspace, by allowing tourist to Mt. Kumgang, and not least, by selling scuds and other ballistic missiles to Middle East countries.<sup>45</sup> However, the profit is not sufficient to sustain its economy and it can not continue to do it forever. The North Korean leadership is very hesitant to take market oriented economic reform as the way to survive. This is because such reform would pose extreme danger to its regime, like the former Soviet Union and the East European communist regime had experienced. The reform measures will open the door for information that North Korean authorities call "ideological and cultural infiltration." A recent commentary by the official North Korean news agency declared that the notion of reform and opening are a "Trojan Horse tasked with destabilizing socialism" for capitalism.<sup>46</sup> It is taking every measure to minimize the exposure of its people from outside contact while opening diplomatic relationships with western countries. However, information will spread among the North Korean people, whatever measure the regime takes. When the average people find out the reality, the indoctrination effort will be useless. Their loyalty and their socio-ideological foundation will collapse very rapidly when North Korea finds the reality of their life compared to the ROK.

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<sup>44</sup> Bosworth, *The Role of the United States*.

<sup>45</sup> Manning.

<sup>46</sup> Noland Marcus, *Economic Integration and Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula*; available from <http://www.iie.com/testimony/korinteg.htm>: Institute for International Economics; Internet; accessed 10/25/2000.



Internationally, North Korea continues to play with weapons of mass destruction. It has been kept pushing others to the brink. How long and how much the other can be pushed is in doubt.

If this trend continues, it will eventually collapse. Once, the collapse process start, it will be accelerated very quickly. The social system will collapse. The situation will rapidly escalate. Fighting may take place for power, scarce resources such as food, fuel, etc. The military may be involved in the fighting. Some of the factions may ask for intervention from China or Russia. The collapse of Kim Jong-il's regime may be followed by (1) a rather peaceful change of leadership (2) civil war between factions to gain power, and (3) complete anarchy status. It is expected that it will occur in the form of a combination of the three. In any case, there will be tremendous suffering as well as increased instability. The North Koreans are likely to try to come to the South as well as to China and to Russia in search of food, security and jobs. This paper will focus on this scenario, as this may lead to a multinational SASO with the ROK Army's role not defined.

The last and most favorable scenario is that the North Korean regime stays in power, but decides to seek unification with the ROK due to the realization that is the only way to survive. The recent North Korean activities may indicate that there has been a change in strategic direction. Kim Jong-il, having consolidated power, may feel sufficiently confident to break out of North Korea's strategic isolation. The summit may represent an important step in the strategic reorientation of North Korea. The North Korean leadership may recognize that they don't have any other choice but to engage with the ROK. Kim Jong-il may feel that he will not have a counterpart better than Kim

Dae-jung, the President of the ROK who actively promotes the engagement policy. If he decides to seek unification with the ROK, he may be able to preserve much of the benefits he has gained through negotiation. He may even become an important figure in the Korean history by significantly contributing toward reunification. Kim Jong-il can turn every blame of the past to his father's generation, while advocating him as patriot for the country and the people. In this case, unification will take place in accordance with the ROK's reunification policy.

In summary, the North Korean future is hard to predict. However, considering the North's current situation, it may collapse without a fight with the ROK. The key indicators for such a scenario are the failure of economic development, information control, socio-ideological system, military, and international support.

### **The Unification Scenarios**

The unification policy of the two Koreas will be discussed before proceeding to the unification scenario. The unification policy of the ROK is expressed as a three-phase strategy that will allow a smooth and peaceful transition to a unified peninsula for the prosperity and continuous development of Korea. The first stage consists of reconciliation and cooperation between the ROK and the North. The second stage is the establishment of a Korean Commonwealth. The final stage is complete integration of Korea through a democratic election. The current ROK government announced three principles of North Korean policy to improve peace, reconciliation and cooperation.<sup>47</sup>

They are :

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<sup>47</sup> The Ministry of Unification.

1. No armed provocation by North Korea will be tolerated
2. A take over or absorption of North Korea will not be attempted
3. Reconciliation and cooperation will be expanded

The unification policy of North Korea is quite different from that of the ROK. Pyongyang's leadership has regarded the ROK (or South Chosun) as a flawed, corrupt, and illegitimate colonial regime. Thus, preserving any vestiges of the southern system would be unacceptable for them. From the very beginning, their goal has been the liberation of the South on Pyongyang's terms of unification under communist rule. Consequently, North Korea's unification policy required the North to prepare for and hasten the inevitable collapse of the ROK by every means at its disposal.<sup>48</sup> The North's unification principal is founded on the Confederation of Koryo. It involves first establishing a Supreme National Confederate Assembly with equal representation from the North, the South and oversea Koreans. A Confederate Standing Committee (CSC) would guide both regional governments and administrate all affairs of the confederate state. North Korea's plan calls for the new country to be neutral and non-aligned with no affiliation to any political or military alliance or bloc. North Korea has established several pre-conditions for the establishment of this confederate state to which the South must agree. They are:

1. the elimination of fascist rule in the South
2. the repeal of anti-Communist confrontation policy
3. the abandonment of National Security Law
4. the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea

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<sup>48</sup> Eberstadt.

5. release of political prisoners including communists<sup>49</sup>

Based on the two Koreas unification policies, the possible reunification scenarios will be discussed. Three broad scenarios are possible. The first scenario is unification through gradual integration, which represents the ROK's unification policy. This is the preferred scenario for peaceful unification by the ROK as well as by the major powers. It will prevent the instability caused by the catastrophic collapse of North Korea, and will promise economic prosperity in the region. The unification process will present ample opportunities for investment. The reconciliation and integration process will take less time than any other scenario. The current ROK government is engaging with North Korea to achieve the unification goal through this scenario. The President of the ROK, Kim Dae-jung, emphasized at the June 2000 summit that the two Koreas should never repeat the tragic history of the past, reminding Kim Jong-il of the Korean War. The ROK together with selected western countries is trying to offer economic cooperation to help North Korea come out of the current economic difficulties.

This scenario assumes several fundamental assumptions. First, North Korea has to change its unification policy. However, in spite of the recent developments, North Korea has not acknowledged any change of unification policy. Second, the two sides need to implement confidence-building measures including military threat reduction, cessation of political propaganda, a permanent peace treaty, exchange of mail, freedom of movement, and encouragement of investment. It requires full engagement from both sides. However, the North is responding only when it wants to accept the opponent's proposal. Third, every decision will be made through negotiation based on concession

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<sup>49</sup> David L Cook, *Korean Unification A Game Theoretical and Bargaining Analysis*, (Monterey, CA, Naval Postgraduate School, June 1994), 20.

and mutual trust. The two sides will need to draft laws that govern all aspects of a new Korea including political structure, military integration, and economic reform. However, considering its policy, economy and population it will be very difficult to reach any consensus. Especially, in that the North Korean regime is notorious for brinkmanship. It is expected that the negotiation process will be very difficult and fragile. The two sides will consistently be in conflict to gain more power. The unification of Yemen is a perfect example. The civil war broke out because they could not reach agreement.<sup>50</sup> Lastly, the North cannot and will not change overnight. A certain level of patience is required throughout this process including control of migration. However, once the reconciliation process starts, North Korea will not stay and wait for change in the North. Many North Koreans will cry out for a better life style and try to move to the South. For example, many East Germans left their homeland to go west. This consisted of young people, usually with children. They lost patience and did not want to wait for unification for another generation to reach Western standards.<sup>51</sup> Thus it maybe the most favorable, but problematic scenario for unification.

The second scenario is unification through absorption following the North's collapse. The ROK government's unification policy clearly denounces any attempt to absorb the North. However, the ROK may have to take over North Korea when it collapses despite the fact that the ROK does not endorse this scenario. As John Edwin Mroz pointed out, the German unification was not the result of West German resoluteness

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<sup>50</sup>Paul D. Rounsaville, *Korean Unification A United States Army Special Forces Work for Employment*, (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 1997), 19-36.

<sup>51</sup> Mroz, xvi.

and determination, nor was it caused by Soviet diplomatic clumsiness on the issue of socialist borders. The true causes of German unification lay in the efficiency of the East German regime, its lack of competitiveness, financial bankruptcy, and inability to adapt to the requirements of a technologically advanced society.<sup>52</sup> North Korea's economic problems, and ineffectiveness is worse than that of East Germany. Once, the collapse process start, the situation will rapidly develop. The ROK will not have enough time to respond, if not prepared prior for such a scenario. The West German government in Bonn was anything but prepared for a quick unification. ... And not until his (Kohl's) visit to Dresden on December 19, 1989 did the chancellor become convinced that unification would occur in a matter of months rather than years.<sup>53</sup> This paper will focus on this scenario to define the ROK Army's role in case such a scenario happens.

The third scenario is unification through conflict, North Korea decides to attack the ROK. As discussed earlier, the North has been prepared for this scenario ever since it was founded, and it has developed military capabilities. Especially their artillery, multiple rocket launchers, armored and artillery corps, special operations forces, and WMD provide North Korea significant attack capabilities. The ROK-US alliance will counter the North's aggression according to its plan. It is organized, trained and equipped to deter the North's aggression, and to defeat the North should deterrence fail. The unification process will be post-hostility operations by the winner. This is the most destructive way of unification. However long the war may take and whoever wins, both

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., vii.

sides will be devastated. Also this will result in extending the time for reconciliation. Therefore both sides should attempt to avoid such a scenario.

In summary, the ROK should be able to deal with all of the above scenarios. While it maintains readiness for the worst case, it should continue to actively pursue the reconciliation process.

## CHAPTER THREE

### STRATEGIC INTEREST OF MAJOR PLAYERS

The interests of the major regional powers Japan, China, Russia and the United States during and after reunification will be examined in this chapter. The Korean peninsula is where the strategic interests of major powers intersect due to its location. Security on the Korean Peninsula has been influenced by these powers. It has been the land bridge between China and Japan. Korea also shares a border with Russia and the Korean straight gives Russia an economic outlet to the Pacific region. Historically, the major powers have competed to gain dominance or to prevent dominance by any one of the nations. Although each country has a unique relationship with the two Koreas, they all are interested in maintaining regional stability and economic prosperity.

Depending on its own short and long term strategic interest, each country will cooperate or try to prevent the unification process. However, as Lee pointed out, the division of Korea was imposed by the power politics of major powers and the dominating international environment after the Second World War. Therefore the United States, Russia, China and Japan have some obligation to assist in the reunification of Korean peninsula.<sup>54</sup>

#### United States

According to US National Security Strategy, the US national objectives are enhancing US security, bolstering US economic prosperity and promoting democracy

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<sup>54</sup> Boo-Kyoon Lee, *Korean Unification Problems and Solutions*, (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 1994), 11.



abroad.<sup>55</sup> To achieve those objectives, its strategic interest in the Korean Peninsula is peaceful resolution of the Korean conflict with a non-nuclear, reunified Korea.<sup>56</sup> Stability in the region is important for the US to maintain its current trade. The ROK is the US's ninth largest trading partner. The annual two-way trade accounts 54.3 billion dollars.<sup>57</sup> The unification will create an opportunity to expand markets and to exploit natural resources in the North Korean area. It will also create tremendous investment opportunity for infrastructure rebuilding, and industrial development.

The security interest of stability can be achieved through military presence and prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The US military commitment to the Korean Peninsula began with the cold war. Its commitment to Korean War made it possible to defeat the North Korean aggression. The US has maintained a military presence since then. Its presence in the region has contributed in deterring war on the Korean Peninsula and in maintaining stability in the region. At the same time, its military presence has made the US a regional player. The US will try to maintain its military presence even after unification.<sup>58</sup> If the US decides to withdraw completely from the ROK, it may face difficulty in finding justification for its forces in Japan, as the forces in Japan are linked with that of the ROK. The US will also find it

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<sup>55</sup> The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, (The White House, October 1998), 6.

<sup>56</sup> The Ministry of National Defense, 43.

<sup>57</sup> US exported 22.9, imported 31.3 billion dollars to and from ROK in 1999, US Census Bureau, *US Trade with Korea, South in 1999*; available from <http://www.census.gov/foreigntrade/sitc1/1999/c5800.html#13>; Internet; accessed 11/06/2000.

<sup>58</sup> US Embassy Seoul, *Secretary of Defense Cohen Sept. 22 Tokyo Press Conference*; available from <http://www.usembassy.state.gov/seoul/www42z8.html>; Internet; accessed 11/10/2000. Also see, *Assistant Secretary of State Stanley Roth Hopes for Normal North Korea*; available from <http://www.usembassy.state.gov/seoul/www4472.html>; Internet; accessed 7/15/2000

difficult to act as a regional player because it does not have any territory in the North East Asian region. Consequently, it will lose its ability to maintain influence within the region.<sup>59</sup> The US presence in the North Asia region has been and will be a significant contributing factor to prevent an arms race in this region.

The US is also interested in preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles of North Korea. It continues to address these concerns through negotiations with North Korea. The Agreed Framework in 1994 and establishment of KEDO are some of examples for such activities. This policy is expected to continue even after unification. The US will want to make sure that the WMD and related material is secured and disposed of to prevent the technology being transferred to other hostile nations or organizations.

The US has to be very careful in planning long term relationships with a united Korea. It should try to build long term trust and to avoid a shortsighted approach. Historically, the relationship between Korea and the US began more than 100 years ago. It has not always been friendly and cooperative. As ambassador Bosworth stated, the US first encountered Korea in an imperialist mode, demanding extra-territoriality and unequal treaties ... the Korean view of the Taft-Katsura Agreement is well known.<sup>60</sup> The Defensive Perimeter of the US in the Far East in January 1950 that excluded the Korean Peninsula provided a good excuse to Kim, Il-sung to initiate the Korean War. While the United States has national interests in Korea, the Korean people have much at stake.

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<sup>59</sup>Hyun-dong, Kim, "Future Developments on the Korean peninsula : Implications for the United State and Korea", review of *East Asia's Potential for Instability and Crisis* by Jonathan D. Pollack and Hyun-dong, Kim, (Santa Monica, CA, RAND, 1995), 197.

<sup>60</sup>Stephen W. Bosworth., *US-Korea Relations*, Speech at KCFR (November 15, 1999); available from <http://www.usembassy.state.gov/seoul/wwwh4489.html>; Internet; accessed 7/15/2000.

Therefore if the US focuses on immediate gains, it may lose long term gains created by the unification of Korea.

## Japan

The strategic interests of Japan are similar to that of the US, stability and economic prosperity. Japan needs stability in the region to continue its prosperity.

Japan has always referred to Korea as “the dagger” pointed at the heart of Japan. Conversely, Korea has been Japan’s gateway to mainland Asia and Russia.<sup>61</sup> This expression describes the strategic value of the peninsula in Japanese perspective. Japan’s security environment is quite different from that of the US due to its proximity. For example, while the US is more interested in preventing WMD proliferation, the Japanese are more interested in stopping development and deployment as it causes a direct security concern to the Japanese. The Japanese government has also used North Korea’s missile test in August 1998 as an excuse to enhance its military capabilities. Its revision of the Guidelines for a US-Japan Defense Cooperation and Japan’s decision to join the US Theater Missile Defense (TMD) program allow Japan to expand the Japanese Self Defense force’s activity beyond its territory. The Japanese defense budget, of 41 billion in 1997, is already well over its neighboring countries.<sup>62</sup>

Japan has not taken a position whether its interests would be better served by a unified or a divided Korea since it wishes to avoid accusations of interfering in Korea’s

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<sup>61</sup> Andrew C Nahm, *Korea, Tradition & Transformation A History of The Korean People*, (Seoul, Korea: Hollym Corporation Publishers, 1989), 172.

<sup>62</sup> Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1998-1999*, (London, UK, Oxford University Press, 1998), 183.

affairs.<sup>63</sup> However, considering the historical relationship between the two countries, and the potential economic and military power of a united Korea, Japan does not support a unified Korea. Given North Korea's collapse is unavoidable, the Japanese will be very interested in verifying the security and disposal of WMD as it is a consistent security threat to Japan. Japan will want to reestablish stability on the Korean Peninsula as quickly as possible to prevent refugees flowing into its territory and the spill over violence. The Japanese Self-Defense force will increase patrols along the west coast. However, Koreans will deny any kind of Japanese military role on the Korean Peninsula due to the animosity and distrust toward the Japanese, even though the Japanese possess significant military capabilities. Japan's aggression in the early 1900's, denial of wrongdoing, and frequent territorial claims continues to hurt relations with both Korea and China. However, Japan will be asked to participate in any kind of security arrangement that will stabilize in the region.

When Korea is reunited, the Japanese leadership will want to have continued US military presence in the area to prevent an arms race in this region. However, the size and status of US Forces in Japan will be affected. Changes in the international security environment, beginning with the North's collapse, will lead to increased questioning of the purpose of the US presence. The Japanese response to the 1995 rape in Okinawa showed the resentment of the Japanese.<sup>64</sup> The Japanese leadership will face increased

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<sup>63</sup> David Reese, "The Prospect for North Korea's Survival", *Adelphi Paper 323*, (International Institute for Strategic Studies, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 1998), 72.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas S. Foley, *U.S.-Japan: The State of the Relationship*, speech at the Japan- America Society of Washington D.C. on 20 November, 2000, available from <http://www.usembassy.state.gov/tokyo/wwwhg135.html>; Internet; accessed 11/24/2000.

pressure to reexamine or reduce US military presence. Especially, the Japanese younger generation will want to adopt the security roles of a normal nation.<sup>65</sup>

Economically, the collapse of North Korea will give Japan an investment opportunity. Japan will want to expand markets and to exploit resources (natural resources as well as labor sources) in the North Korean area. The estimated cost of unification ranges from 200 billion to 3,172 billion dollars over 5 to 10 years. Whatever the real cost may be, it will be a huge burden for the ROK.<sup>66</sup> At this stage, the ROK will have to request economic assistance in the North's reconstruction from Japan. Japan is the only country in the region that is able to provide such a financial support. Japan will benefit by providing financial support. The projected railroad connection between ROK and North Korea will be further extended to a Trans-China Railroad and Trans-Siberian Railway that will link North East Asia to Central Asia and Europe. The railroad system will reduce shipping time from three weeks to one week.<sup>67</sup> Japan, as a large trading country, will benefit from using the system. There is even a possibility of connecting the railroad from Korea to Japan through an undersea rail tunnel.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Dennis Blair, CINC, US PACOM, remarks at the World Affairs Council, 25 June 2000, available from <http://www.pacom.mil/ref2000/sst/world.htm>; Internet; accessed 9/15/2000.

<sup>66</sup> Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse: The Future of the Two Koreas*, (Washington DC, Institution for International Economics, 2000), 308.

<sup>67</sup> Stratfor, *Japan/Russia-Trade Routes*; available from <http://www.stratfor.com/services/giu2000/091400.asp>; Internet : accessed 10/09/ 2000.

<sup>68</sup> Stratfor, *How Korea's New Railroad Will Change Northeast Asia*; available from <http://www.stratfor.com/services/giu2000/080100.asp>; Internet: accessed 8/12/ 2000.

## China

Similar to other countries, the strategic interests of China are related to security and economic prosperity. Chinese interests will be affected by North Korea's collapse, also.

The Chinese say that Korea is to China as lips are to teeth and each must share in the joys and sorrows of the other.<sup>69</sup> Without lips, teeth have no protection. The proximity of the Korean Peninsula to China and its contiguous border give China a direct security concern on the peninsula. The Chinese intervention during Korean War is an example of this. Despite a difficult situation after the long fight against the Kuomintang in 1949, Mao decided to intervene in the Korean War in 1950 due to security concerns. China provided aid to North Korea to help it survive, as China prefers the peninsula remain divided. However, China's position on the Korean unification is consistent with its policy of not interfering in other countries internal affairs. For the Chinese it is a matter for the two Koreas to resolve. Historically, China has had good relationships with Korea. From China's point of view, there is no reason to assume that a unified Korea would not want a cooperative and constructive relationship.<sup>70</sup>

Diplomatically, China has played a very important role. China made a significant contribution to the summit agreement. This is proven by the Kim Jong-il's visit to Chinese embassy in Pyongyang and Beijing in June 2000. With a North Korean collapse, China will seek a key role as a mediator. China may accept limited US military presence

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<sup>69</sup> Nahm.

<sup>70</sup> Reese, 75.

in Korea as a linchpin to prevent an arms race in this region. However, China would be unlikely to accept US forces along its border with the peninsula.

Chinese immediate concern will be handling a massive refugee flow into China. The North Koreans living in the northern provinces have suffered the most from the famines. Many of them will cross the Chinese border to get food from relatives living in China. Currently, there are over 1.8 million ethnic Koreans living in China. Another Chinese concern is disarming and demobilizing the North Korean military. If it is not done properly, it will be a destabilizing factor not only on the Korean Peninsula, but also in the northern part of the China. The Chinese will also want to make sure that WMD and related materials are secured and disposed of safely to remove the excuse for the Japanese to continue the development of the theater missile defense (TMD) system.

China has economic interests too. With a North Korean collapse, China will no longer need to provide aid to North Korea. This will lessen the Chinese burden. In addition, even though China does not have sufficient financial surplus to invest in North Korea, it will benefit when the North Korean region is developed. The trade volume will increase drastically between a united Korea and China. In the long term, China can easily develop its vast resources in Manchuria using the money and technology and transportation infrastructure of Korea. The railroad connection will allow the Chinese access to Korean and Europe markets with cheaper transportation costs.

## **Russia**

Russia's role in the Korean Peninsula reduced significantly since the Soviet Union collapsed. Internal difficulties prevented Russia from direct involvement in the Far East. It was not able to participate in the KEDO consortium, and it was not invited to

the four-party talks. But this does not mean it has no strategic interest in this region. Historically, Russia advanced east and south to get warm water ports. It had a border dispute with China. The Southern Kurile islands dispute is not settled yet. The US blocked the Russia's advance to the south during the Korean War. Militarily, it still maintains substantial combat power within the Far Eastern Military District.<sup>71</sup> However, it can not match the regional powers in modernizing its forces due to lack of funds. Therefore, Russia needs to maintain the status quo until it recovers from economic difficulty. Russia does not want the US to deploy theater missile defense systems in the region. Russia may want limited US presence because it does not want to see either Japan or China replace the US troops in the region.<sup>72</sup>

Stability in the region will develop the Russian economy. It needs to have both Korea and Japan as trading partners as well as a financial source to develop its resources in Siberia. The trans-Siberia railroad, prospectively will serve as a land route from East Asia to Europe, when it's linked with the South-North Korean railroad, offering tremendous economic potential for Russia. Also the plan to construct a natural gas pipeline from far east of Russia to Korea can be realized, as well as a joint development program in Siberia.<sup>73</sup> The unification of the Korean peninsula will remove the road barriers to direct transportation across the Korean Peninsula. In this regard, Russia will benefit from a united Korea. The Russian President Vladimir Putin chose North Korea as

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<sup>71</sup>The Ministry of National Defense, 39.

<sup>72</sup>Lee, 21.

<sup>73</sup> Ming Liu, "An Obsessed Task Prospects, Models, and Impact of Korean Reunification," review of *East Asia An International Quarterly* (Brunswick, 17, 4, Winter 1999), 30-53.



the first foreign nation to visit as the President of Russia.<sup>74</sup> It might be the signal that Russia has begun engagement with Far East.

## **Republic of Korea**

The foremost strategic objective of the ROK is the reunification of the peninsula in a peaceful, democratic, and self-determined way. To achieve this objective, the ROK may have to deal with the collapse of North Korea without fighting. There are several things the ROK has to do to deal with the collapse of North Korea. First, the ROK has to coordinate with regional players to stabilize the situation and to relieve suffering as quickly as possible. When North Korea collapses, the neighboring may try to intervene for their national security. They may collectively try to form a UN protectorate type interim state by claiming it as the best way of stabilizing the situation. However, Koreans have had a bitter experience with a UN protectorate state in 1945, when the UN tried to set up that type of government on the Korean peninsula, it did not work. Korea was excluded from the decision table of her own destiny and the Korean War was the result of a mishandled UN protectorate state. Any such state will be effected by the participating countries national interests that will make negotiation difficult and prolong the unification process. In the worst case, it may cause a second Korean War. Therefore any attempt to intervene must be prevented. In that sense, Mr. Bosworth's remark was right; "Only Koreans can solve Korea's problems. Only South Korea has both the

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<sup>74</sup> Stratfor, *How Korea's New Railroad Will Change Northeast Asia* ;available from <http://www.stratfor.com/services/giu2000/080100.asp>; Internet; accessed 8/12/2000.

resources and the supreme national interest to help North Korea overcome the economic and humanitarian tragedy with which it is now faced.”<sup>75</sup>

Second, the ROK has to deal with massive starvation, migration, unemployment disarming and demobilization, verification of security and safe disposal of WMD, infrastructure rebuilding, and prevention of crime. If it does not deal with these properly, it will directly affect the unification process. However the ROK may not be able to deal with many of these activities alone. The ROK will have to coordinate with neighboring countries and other international organizations such as UN and Red Cross. As mentioned earlier, the above problems require significant amount of expenditure. The ROK will need external resources. The ROK can get these from the international community, including financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. The ROK has to attract many international private investors by offering various benefits. However the ROK has to be very careful in accepting any offers which may turn in to unacceptable debt in the long term to any nation.

Third, the ROK has to have support from its own people. Koreans living in South will experience temporary economic setback, such as tax and unemployment rate and increase pressure of less pay. The people understand and are willing to pay for unification. However, if it goes beyond their expectation, people may start to object to the unification. For the North Koreans, their expectation for a better life will be much higher than they can attain. They will keep asking for more resources from the South. There will be constant conflict between people from both sides. Therefore, the unified

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<sup>75</sup> Bosworth, *American Policy*.

Korean government has to be able to provide a vision for security and prosperity and ask people to share the burden for a certain period.

Lastly, a unified Korea will need to show its willingness to assume new responsibilities as a regional player. Its policy should be moderate, predictable and non-threatening to its neighbors. It will need to maintain military capabilities at the minimum level that can counter potential external threat. By doing so, it can shift the defense budget to economic development.

In summary, the common strategic interests of the four states are stability in and around the peninsula and access to the market in the region. When North Korea collapses, each state will seek to expand or at least to maintain influence to achieve its strategic interests. The US will want to maintain military presence in the peninsula and in Japan as well.<sup>76</sup> However, it has to develop justification for the military presence in the region. Japan will want to have a US presence to prevent an arms race in this region while wanting to attain normal country status. China and Russia may want to have a limited US military presence in the region to prevent Japan from increasing its military capability while not wanting to have the US's theater missile defense capability in the region. None of the states wants a unified Korea becoming a nuclear power. All the nations want to verify the security and safe disposal of North Korea's WMD and its related material. Japan, China, and Russia will try to stop or to minimize migration of North Koreans to their countries. They will also want to stop any spill over of guerrilla or criminal activities from North Korea. Therefore, measures to establish stability as well as a long-

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<sup>76</sup> Andrea, Stone, "US Troops will Remain in South Korea", *USA Today*, October 25, 2000, p.18; available from <http://ebird.dtic.mil/oct2000/e20001025ustroops.htm>; Internet; accessed 10/26/2000.

term balance of power in the region should be developed. It includes control of refugees, arms, WMD and establishment regional security forum, similar to NATO.

The four countries will be interested in potential economic gain from a unified Korea by accessing the Korean market, its resources and its transportation infrastructure link to Europe.

The ROK's strategic interest is reunification through a democratic and peaceful way. To achieve this, the Korean people need to have a certain period of patience with the vision of a unified Korea. The national leadership will need to provide a clear and positive vision to the people with a sense of honor and pride.

These strategic interests must be understood in developing COAs for the stability and support operation following the collapse of North Korea without a fight.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### POSSIBLE COAs FOR SASO

Possible COAs for SASO will be discussed in this chapter. In developing the COAs, several assumptions are necessary. First, North Korea will collapse without fighting the ROK and no significant internal conflict requiring substantial peace enforcement operations will occur. Second, there will be multinational forces and NGOs and PVOs involvement in the stability and support operation. It is also expected that various NGOs and PVOs such as Red Cross, UNHCR, UNICEF, IAEA will be involved in this region. These assumptions are close to facts than assumptions, and they provide the basis for the development of a course of action to deal with the collapse of North Korea.

In developing COAs, there are an inexhaustible number of COAs that can be considered. However, two COAs are possible which pass the feasibility, acceptability and suitability (FAS) test. The COAs using a bilateral agreement with China, Russia, or the US has been considered, but dismissed as they would not be acceptable to the non-participant. As it is been discussed earlier, each power wants to gain dominance while not wanting any other nation to get dominance. The coalition with four nations, the ROK, the US, Russia and China under a UN flag as LTC Maxwell suggested also has been considered.<sup>77</sup> However, it has a similar disadvantage as a UN led SASO. In addition, the US will not be able to provide 12 battalions or 4 brigades of combat forces

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<sup>77</sup> David S. Maxwell, *Catastrophic Collapse of North Korea : Implications for the United States Military*, (Fort. Leavenworth, KS, School of Advanced Military Studies, United states Army Command and General Staff College, 1996), 36-40.

and supporting units, considering current US Army troop strength.<sup>78</sup> Two possible COAs will be developed. Each COA has distinct advantages and disadvantages.

First COA is the SASO led by ROK Army. The ROK government will be the main actor in any type of collapse scenario. It has the constitutional requirement for unification and moral responsibility from ethical, historical, cultural ties to the north. There will be a significant public outcry for action when the North collapses. The family reunion clearly showed the ROK people's care and commitment. The international community also recognizes this. Therefore, it is likely to be the most politically acceptable COA to the international community. The ROK Army has the capability, also. It has sufficient manpower and organizations immediately available. It has 560,000 active duty and roughly three million reserve personnel with 50 divisions.<sup>79</sup> Once the decision is made, the ROK Army can rapidly deploy two divisions, one active and one reserve division, in each existing province in the North without exposing the South to danger. There are nine provinces and three special cities in North.<sup>80</sup> Therefore 24 divisions will be deployed. Each division is self sufficient with organic combat, combat support and combat service support units including engineer, medical, aviation, signal, military police units, etc. With its organic capability, the ROK Army can conduct a wide range of SASO not only disaster relief but also community assistance. It will help to build basic infrastructures such as roads, railroads, and bridges. The ROK Army has a long tradition of providing support for public and national projects. In 1999, military

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>79</sup> The Ministry of National Defense, 245.

<sup>80</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *CIA Factbook*; available from <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/ks.html>:Internet; accessed 7/15/2000.

support saved 18.4 % of national road construction expenditure. The disaster relief operations are part of their mission, including flood, forest fire, heavy snow, and accident relief.<sup>81</sup> The transfer of authority to the civil government will be smoother and faster with this COA. It does not require an interim government that may cause a problem when it transfers authority to the ROK civil government.

The disadvantage of this COA is the fiscal burden for the ROK. Some insist that the fiscal realities of bringing stability to the north and reunification by absorption may cost too much for the ROK. However, this is not the case. In fact, the overall cost for SASO led by ROK is much less than any other COA. The real problem is who pays for what actions. The ROK has to negotiate with other states and organizations to sponsor the operation. Another limitation is that the ROK Army has very limited peacekeeping experience. It started to participate in peacekeeping operations in Somalia in 1993, and since then it has been doing PKO duties in five regions.<sup>82</sup>

The second COA is SASO led by United Nations (UN). The UN is a world wide recognized organization that has dealt with various crises. It can prevent dominance by a single nation since all players can pursue their goals through negotiation though it may be less than optimal. It also has an approved set of rules for peacekeeping operations by all members such as Chapter VI and Chapter VII. The UN's peacekeeping experience can be applied to this case. The UN mandate will provide parameters and legitimacy for the use of force to the participating forces. Economically, the UN will provide the cost associated with the SASO. UN involvement will bring a perception of stability to the

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<sup>81</sup> The Ministry of National Defense, 232-236.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 117-120.

population as well as investors who can provide funds for infrastructure redevelopment and create employment opportunities.

However, the UN operation is inherently fragile. It does not have enforcement authorities to its member nations. The UN force commander normally has very limited range of command authority. It is especially true when the situation worsens. The commanders and staffs will place first priority on his nation's interest over the UN's interests. It is especially true for the major powers. They respect the UN's agreement when it coincides with their national interests. The UN mandate normally is very restrictive and narrow. It does not give much flexibility to commanders. Quite often, the peacekeeping force can not provide medical support to the locals unless there is life-threatening emergency. The UN is very often affected by few powerful nations. The participating forces will act according to their national interests, and there may be constant fighting. The UN has not conducted post conflict operation that led to unification. It is a new type of mission. It also takes a relatively long time until the peacekeeping forces actually arrive in the area of operation. It needs time to get UN resolutions, to identify and coordinate forces and resources with member nations, and to deploy forces. This process is costly. Sustainment and rotation will be costly, also. The force package will also be very limited. As LTC Maxwell suggested, 12 composite brigades would be required to have a brigade in each province. This is very large force that the UN is unlikely able to support considering current peacekeeping missions around the world and its available funds. If the UN chooses a smaller package, it means its role will be limited. This COA will reduce the trust and credibility of the ROK government for inviting foreign intervention for the paramount goal of the Korean people's



unification. It will ultimately affect the honor and pride of the greater Korean. The Korean people had a bitter experience of UN Protectorate, and there would be severe resistance.

Which COA will serve better for the ROK as well as international community? From the analysis of advantages and disadvantages, the first COA seems more attractive. It can respond quicker than second COA. It can deploy more troops with less training. It is easier to sustain and less cost. It will also be received both internationally and domestically. It can avoid very complicated negotiation process. It will be less affected by the major powers. It has flexibility, performing a wider range of operations including infrastructure rebuilding. Transfer of authority to civil government will be easier, and redeployment requirements will be much less.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

North Korea seems fairly stable in terms of political, socio-ideological, military and diplomatic perspectives. As Ambassador Bosworth stated, it maintains stability through stark draconianism in maintaining domestic order and diplomacy of threat and blackmail vis-à-vis its neighbors and their allies.<sup>83</sup> However, it will not be able to maintain stability forever this way. Kim Jong-il understands that he needs to improve the North Korean economy to stay in power for long period of time. Its Juche methodology only makes its economy worse. His recent activities can be understood in this regard. He is trying to improve its economy by attracting investment from outside at very selective area. He hopes to make hard currency by doing this while minimizing the danger of exposing its people to outside information. However, the North will not be able to improve its economy without fully opening its border and engaging with the world. It needs to do substantial market oriented reform to attract investment form outside and to encourage its people to work. Once again, it will be facing danger of exposing its people to information. Every attempt will make the situation worse. The collapse and subsequent absorption by the ROK is possible.

The strategic interests of the major powers are centered around stability and economic prosperity. They want access to new markets and do not desire instability due to massive migration, spill over violence, and proliferation of WMD. They all want a balance of power, also.

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<sup>83</sup> Bosworth, *The Role of the United States*.

The best COA to deal with the collapse, is the ROK Army to lead the multinational and interagency SASO. The key tasks the ROK Army must be prepared to conduct SASO are recommended in the appendix. They include maintenance of combat readiness, establishment of combined, joint and interagency coordination systems, integration of the North Korean military into unified Korean Army, security and safe disposal of WMD, establishment of law and order, control of migration and displaced personnel, assistance to the humanitarian relief operations, demining operations, and infrastructure rebuilding. Each one of the tasks are closely related and done simultaneously.

The collapse and unification may happen much faster than expected. Once begun, there will little time to prepare. The ROK needs to coordinate with the regional powers to deal with North Korea's collapse, as the West German government did for its unification with the surrounding four powers, Great Britain, France, the US and the Soviet Union. They decided to support the coming German unification through Ottawa Declaration in February 1990.<sup>84</sup> It must seize the initiative for unification while minimizing foreign intervention to prevent the repetition of unpleasant history of UN protectorate.

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<sup>84</sup> Rounsaville, 11–36.

## **APPENDIX**

### **The ROK Army's key tasks**

The key tasks the ROK Army must prepare for conducting SASO as the main effort when North Korea collapses without fighting are presented in this section. These tasks must be executed simultaneously and as soon as possible after the nature of the collapse is identified as they are mutually supporting and cannot be conducted unilaterally.

#### 1. Maintenance of combat readiness.

The collapse of the North does not preclude the possibility of an insurgency or resistance by factions. At the early stage of SASO, there will be a strong possibility of escalation in the process of disarming and demobilizing the North Korean military. If there is any kind of such indication, it has to be controlled at the earliest stage possible. Therefore the ROK Army has to maintain combat readiness in the framework of ROK-US alliance.

#### 2. Establishment of combined, joint and interagency coordination system.

Multinational forces, government agencies, NGOs, and PVOs will be involved in the SASO. Therefore the ROK Army has to establish coordination systems, such as a combined and interagency coordination center for SASO, to coordinate and de-conflict issues.

#### 3. Information operations.

There will be constant confusion and doubt both domestically and internationally. To remove such confusion and enhance the unification, an effective information operation is essential.

#### 4. Establishment of law and order.

When North Korea collapses, there will be a certain period of chaos and there will be various kinds of competition including criminal activities to attain economic and political leverage. As we witnessed in Eastern Europe, there will be some kind of revenge activities against former communist party members who suppressed them for the last five decades. If this is not controlled early, it will spread very rapidly through out the region and possibly spill over into the South, China, and Russia. Therefore, the ROK Army has to deploy very rapidly and establish law and order to prevent such a situation. An effective humanitarian relief operation will make this process easier. The ROK Army has to be very careful in using existing political and security systems as they were the system as they were the system that the communists have used to oppress the people.

#### 5. Integration of North Korean military into a unified Korean Army.

The North Korean military is the most loyal organization to Kim Jong-il's regime. Special concern is its ground forces, with one million active duty and 7.45 million reserves with 20 corps.<sup>85</sup> North Korea has deployed approximately 10 corps and some 60 divisions and brigades south of the Pyongyang-Wonsan line.<sup>86</sup> There will be commanders who are not satisfied with the situation, and try to take advantage of their military capability. Without controlling them properly, they will be a threat to

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<sup>85</sup> The Ministry of National Defense, 245.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 50.

unification. They may provoke a military confrontation or become guerrilla forces as well as criminal groups. Therefore great effort should be devoted to disarming and demobilizing. Many of these commanders will be incorporated into the unified Korean army. This requires very skillful negotiation and an aggressive information operation. Provision of a job training program and employment opportunity in addition to effective humanitarian relief operations should be combined to make this process effective. All of their weapons and ammunition including small arms need to be secured, and processed in a proper manner. Some selective weapons and ammunition may be utilized while the bulk of them must be destroyed. Destroying stockpiles of weapons and ammunition may exceed the ROK government's capability to absorb. It will require huge amounts of money, technology and time. The major powers need to provide technical and financial support to facilitate this process.

#### 6. Security and safe disposal of WMD.

This includes research, production and storage facilities for nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and its delivery systems. All weapons and related material must be secured and disposed of, and verified by redundant means. The scientists and technicians who are involved in developing such weapons must be identified, and resettled. This will prevent the possibility of transferring these weapons and technology to other hostile nations or terrorist organizations. This requires very close coordination with other agencies such as International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). They will take care of the scientific and technical area while the ROK Army will make sure of its security. The process will need to be explained to all the regional players who have an interest in this

issue. This will remove the doubt and excuse for an arms race among the players in the region.

#### 7. Assistance to the humanitarian relief operations.

North Korea is suffering from a food and fuel shortage. In fact, it is the chief contributor causing the North Korean collapse. Therefore humanitarian relief operations should be conducted at the earliest stage possible. However, the ROK Army will not be the major player on the relief operations. The major player will be NGOs and PVOs. The ROK Army will need to provide maximum effort to assist the relief operations. It may need to provide manpower and equipment for security, convoys, command and control, and at times transportation for operations.

#### 8. Control of migration and displaced personnel.

There will be a massive migration in search of security, food and jobs. Refugees will move by foot, vehicle and sea. Establishment of law and order at the earliest possible time and an effective relief effort along with a development program will create job opportunities reducing the total number of refugees. The ROK Army will need to establish displaced personnel centers along the major movement route. The displaced personnel will be identified and provided necessary information such as mine awareness and a relief program.

#### 9. Demining operation.

The Demilitarized Zone and vicinity on the Korean peninsula is one of the most heavily mined areas in the world. To make things worse, there are many unidentified or unverified mine fields due to lack of records as well as terrain change during torrential rains. The difficulty of clearing minefields was exposed when the South and the North

decided to reconnect the road and railroad. This requires experts, technology and equipment that exceed the ROK Army's capability. The ROK Army has to coordinate with other nations and organizations to clear the mines. The first effort should focus on clearing mines along major road networks as well as educating mine awareness to the people.

#### 10. Infrastructure rebuilding.

Planning and executing infrastructure rebuilding is primarily a government function. Private corporations will assist also. Especially, roads and railroads networks are critical to transport humanitarian aid. At the early stage of operations, there will not be sufficient civilian manpower and equipment to do that. The ROK Army will need to participate in the infrastructure rebuilding. It has capabilities and experiences as well. As discussed earlier, the ROK Army has been doing civil support missions.



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