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International Conference on "Korea at the Crossroads: The Challenges and Prospects", The Institute of Korean Studies (IKS), November 17, 2008, Seoul, Korea  
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# **Bolstering the U.S. Commitment to Improved Inter-Korean Relations**

**Edward A. Olsen**

U.S. Naval Postgraduate School  
(eaolsenphd@att.net)

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## **Bolstering the U.S. Commitment to Improved Inter-Korean Relations**

*Edward A. Olsen*  
(U.S. Naval Postgraduate School)

U.S. policy toward the inter-Korean relations of a divided Korea draws upon a complex historical legacy of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries which influences current and future policy options. American cooperation with the ROK and adversarial relations with the DPRK symbolize the essence of the U.S. role between the two Koreas, but they also provide the framework for post-Cold War U.S. approaches to inter-Korean relations. North Korea's post-Cold War strategic brinkmanship and nuclear agenda have escalated tensions, but also caused Americans during the Clinton and Bush administrations to consider more creative alternatives for dealing with inter-Korean dynamics. U.S. policy options toward inter-Korean affairs also are being shaped by post-9/11 U.S. global security issues and the geopolitical debate they created for the politics of the 2008 presidential election campaigns, setting the stage for the forthcoming Obama administration's potential policies toward Korean relations on bilateral, multilateral, and unification issues. It would be very useful for the Obama administration to support developing a "U.S. Center" focusing on inter-Korean peace and unification.

**Key Words:** Reconciliation, Reunification, Nuclear Weapons, Sunshine Policy, Axis of Evil, Peace Process, Geopolitics, 9/11, Non-Proliferation, Brinkmanship, Six-Party Talks, Carter, GHW Bush, Clinton, GW Bush, McCain, Obama

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## I. Introduction

The United States' relationships with the two states on the divided Korean peninsula are complex for a variety of reasons. They include the nuances of American problems in dealing with a divided Korean nation, the spectrum of complex issues embodied in the evolution of inter-Korean relations since the 1940s, how both of these factors influence Korea's regional and global relations, and the ways in which all of the above shape the ways Americans have perceived -- and do perceive -- the pros and cons of U.S. policy choices in the past and U.S. policy options in the future with regard to the evolution of inter-Korean relations. Bearing that context in mind this analysis shall examine the status of past and present U.S. policies toward inter-Korean affairs, the consequences of those policies, and the contemporary policy options available to the United States for dealing with the two Koreas bilaterally, multilaterally, and in terms of a unification agenda. After that examination a recommendation shall be offered for improving U.S. policy by bolstering the American commitment to improved inter-Korean relations as the two Koreas pursue their quest for reconciliation and reunification.

## II. Historical Legacy of Early U.S. Policy toward the Two Korean States

For those Americans in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century who pay credible attention to how contemporary U.S. foreign, defense, and economic policies toward the two states on the Korean peninsula -- the Republic of Korea (ROK) on the southern half of the peninsula and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on the northern half -- are influenced by the United States' relations with the peninsula's major territorial neighbors in China, Japan, and Russia it is crucial for them to be familiar with how U.S. policies toward Korea in the past were shaped by U.S. interaction with those neighbors. For many Ameri-

cans the earliest stage of that regional interaction would seem to be during the Korean War because of its impact on U.S. policies toward all of the noted countries. In reality it was the United States' relations with the Korean peninsula and its territorial neighbors prior to the Korean War which set the stage for that conflict. While the strongest regional case can be made pertaining to the period immediately prior to the Korean War, it is important to recognize the importance of the legacy of what the United States had done to, with, or for these three neighbors far before the Korean War erupted. This section of this analysis shall provide a succinct survey of history which left a legacy for the contemporary era.

Formative examples of this occurred in the late 19th century when the United States attempted to build on the legacy of what the United States had accomplished *vis-à-vis* Japan in the years following the 1853-54 accomplishments of Commodore Perry's naval-diplomatic intervention in Japan that led to Japan adapting to a Western developmental paradigm. How both China's and Korea's final imperial dynasties reacted to what was going on in and around Japan by strengthening the Qing dynasty's Sinocentric paradigm in ways that would bolster its ties with the Yi Dynasty had an impact on both the United States and Japan's approaches to Korea. Although the United States -- and more obviously the major European powers involved in wartime imperial exploits in Asia -- were more focused on China and Japan than upon the Korean peninsula in between them, the United States in 1866 and 1871 attempted to reach out to Korea in ways that did not succeed. The 1866 tidal destruction of a U.S. merchant ship, the *General Sherman*, was followed in 1871 by a failed naval assault on Kangwha-do near Seoul that strengthened Korean resolve to resist external pressures. In contrast, the fledgling Meiji state in Japan was developing a modern imperial paradigm modeled on the Western powers that were interacting with Japan's innovative national vision. The Meiji government decided to overcome Japanese memories of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's failed military exploits in Korea (1592-1598) -- that caused the successor long-lasting Tokugawa shogunate to become a non-interventionist state -- and launch attacks on Kangwha-do in 1875 to get the Yi dynasty to open up to the outside powers by accepting Japan as an approachable neighbor. China's attempt to mediate the Korea-Japan issues on Chinese terms did not succeed, but did lead to Japan-Korea negotiations that caused Korea to follow China's advice and sign the 1876 Treaty of Kangwha with Japan.

As Western powers began to pay more attention to Korea's role in Sino-Japanese relations China's powerful image among many Koreans reinforced Korean nationalistic xenophobia and reluctance to be drawn into broader international relations. In part because of growing external interest in Korea, coupled with Chinese perceptions of ambitious Japanese versus Czarist Russian potentials *vis-à-vis* Korea's place in a Sinocentric system, the Qing leaders urged the Yi leaders to accept diplomatic ties with the United States because it seemed to be the least risky of any of the states trying to play a diplomatic role. This yielded the May 1882 Incheon Treaty between the United States and Korea. In contrast to the United States' not very productive "Open Door" policy toward China, the Incheon Treaty ended up opening several "doors" into Korea for other Western countries in the form of Chinese encouraged Korean treaties with Britain and Germany in 1883, Russia and Italy in 1884, and France in 1886. Had China's relations with Korea's other two territorial neighbors evolved positively, Korea's international contacts might have produced positive results for both Korea and China. However, Russo-Japanese tensions damaged the prospects for such results and made the period from the mid-1880s to the mid-1890s traumatic for Korea. Korea's domestic Tong-hak rebellion in 1884 caused Japanese and Chinese responses which over time increased Korea's role in Sino-Japanese tensions that a decade later yielded the 1894-95 Sino-Japanese War. That war had obvious importance in terms of the rise of Japan as a major power in Asian affairs, but it also proved to be a major turning

point for Korea's place in the regional international system and how Western countries -- including the United States -- would perceive Korea. In part because of China's loss in that war Korea also lost much of its de facto strategic benefactor-cum-buffer in ways that caused other countries to fill parts of that perceived vacuum. Although various countries -- including the United States -- had that opportunity, two of them clearly seized the opportunity most vigorously -- Japan and Russia.

That opportunity contributed to Japan's larger global relations by underscoring how Japan and Britain's maritime imperialism in the Asia-Pacific region overlapped geopolitically in ways that contributed to the 1902 Anglo-Japanese alliance. Although many countries had to deal with that alliance's significance, the indirect focus of it swiftly became how those two allies shared concerns about Czarist Russia's continental ambitions and expansionism. Given Russian empathy for Korean desires to cope with China's inability to be of meaningful assistance and for Korean aspirations to modernize societally, the Yi dynasty became willing to accept Russian advisors. Because Russian assistance was more influential in northern areas of Korea near their shared border and Japanese involvement in Korean socio-economic development was more extensive in areas farther away from the Russian border -- i.e., to the south of the peninsula, other countries with a commercial and diplomatic presence in Korea experienced circumstances that left a legacy of territorial memories which were revived decades later by Korea's post-World War II national division. That was underscored how Russia refused to accept in 1903 formal Russo-Japanese zones of influence in ways that aggravated Russo-Japanese tensions throughout Northeast Asia and set the stage for the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War. Even though Korea loomed in the background of that war, it was largely waged near Korea -- not in Korea. Nonetheless, given Japan's victory in that war against a major Western power -- after having been victorious in the Sino-Japanese War -- this combination made Korea a significant victim of the Russo-Japanese War. This became very important for the United States' long-term relations with Korea because that war was resolved with the assistance of the United States via the September 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth (New Hampshire) which led to President Theodore Roosevelt receiving the Nobel Peace Prize.

In the wake of Japan's victory in that war, Korea tried to get assistance from several Western countries to encourage Japan not to become too assertive toward Korea because of how it had previously accepted advice and assistance from Russia. The United States drew extra Korean attention because of its diplomatic role in the Treaty of Portsmouth, but it failed because of a separate U.S.-Japan agreement (the Taft-Katsura memorandum signed later in 1905) entailing each side's recognition of the other's interests, respectively, in the Philippines and in Korea. One of the Koreans involved in trying to persuade the United States to be helpful for Korea was Syngman Rhee -- who, when he much later became the ROK's first president, clearly had memories of what the United States was not willing to do back then to help Korea. Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War ended up putting Korea on the path to thirty-five years of often harsh Japanese rule. Despite Korean resistance to Japanese control, for most of the world -- including the United States -- the Japanese empire's domain incorporated numerous areas including Korea. Over time as U.S.-Japanese tensions increased, escalating after the Pearl Harbor attack and the geopolitical stress of World War II, the ways Korea and Koreans had become embedded within the Imperial Japanese enemy and its armed forces reduced the desires among Americans who were familiar with the Japan-Korea situation to implement the case made by the United States, China, and Britain in the 1943 Cairo Declaration that "the three powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent." However, such desires and aspirations certainly did not disappear because some Americans remained attentive to Korea's anti-Japanese resistance

movement, and how some Koreans had actively fought against Japan by escaping Korea to join other countries armed forces' battles with Japanese forces -- especially in China. In that context Japan's surrender to the United States, August 15, 1945, became symbolic for Korea as the defeat of its oppressor. It also raised Korean hopes that the countries which perceived Japan as an enemy -- including the United States, China, and the Soviet Union -- would work together to help Korea rebound after the Japanese departed.

Unfortunately for Korea things did not work out remotely as well as Koreans hoped. Partly because the United States' expectations that Korea would find its way back into the protective embrace of China proved to be unrealistic given the tensions within China between communists and anti-communists, the United States was not as attentive to the details of Korea's future as proved necessary. Similarly, lacking any insights into a crystal ball enabling Americans to perceive what the Cold War would entail, the United States made supposedly temporary territorial arrangements with the USSR for administering Korea after the Japanese regime was removed. This created the framework for what would become between late 1945-1947 the administrative division of the Korean nation into two Korean fledgling states. This was accentuated by how the Soviet Union, after being denied a major role in the allied occupation of postwar Japan, made use of a cadre of pro-communist Koreans, most of whom had been aligned with the USSR and some with China's communist movement, to create the foundation for what would become the DPRK. In vivid contrast, the United States lacked such ambitions regarding Korea in the early stages because of its Sino-centric expectations, was preoccupied with its role in occupied Japan, and largely stumbled into what turned out to be a transformative process of seeing the fledgling Cold War's roots in Eastern Europe spread across Eurasia via Soviet backing for communist trends in China and for how the USSR was more inclined to be creative regarding its portion of the divided Korean peninsula than the United States proved to be. These events, coming on top of the legacy of all the United States had either done or not done *vis-à-vis* Korea since the mid-19th century formative phase, ended up setting the stage for a spectrum of U.S. policies before, during, and well after the Korean War's truce -- extending into the contemporary era of the 21st century which shall be assessed in the remainder of this analysis.<sup>1</sup>

### **III. Evolution of U.S. Policy Dynamics toward a Divided Korea and the Prospects for Reunification**

As the United States adapted its policies toward the on-the-ground realities of a divided Korean peninsula from late 1945 to early 1947 the northern Soviet-guided zone was clearly more focused on a Marxist goal than the relatively diffuse southern zone where the U.S. officials were comparatively speaking much less focused on a clear non-communist set of objectives. American approaches to U.S. policies in Korea were more ambivalent in terms of enthusiasm about the importance of the issues at stake and they were treated as far less important overall to U.S. national interests than what Americans were doing next door in occupied Japan. In many respects U.S. policy activities in Korea amounted to a corollary to the occupation of Japan. Despite those circumstances, a reasonable case can be made that the United States was sincere in its approach to repairing how Korea had become a divided nation by using U.S. influence at the United Nations to create in 1947 a

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1. For more detailed assessments of the historical legacy of these formative years, see Deuchler (1977); Conroy (1993); and Cumings (1997). The author focused on those formative phases of Korea from an American perspective in Olsen (2005a).

United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) intended to back U.N.-backed elections throughout Korea. What sort of government such peninsular-wide elections might have yielded is an interesting proposition because of the virtual certainty that the Soviet-backed zone's system would have injected a heavy dose of Stalinist Marxism into it. However, as is well known, those fully national peninsular elections did not materialize because the Soviets and their fledgling northern Korean cohort did not want to run the risk of having the greater population present in the southern zone under U.S. guidance become a coherent political force that could dominate an electoral process. The net result was a decision to hold UNTCOK-backed elections throughout Korea in May 1948 from which the Soviet-backed northern zone abstained. Although that decision led to the creation of the ROK through May 10th elections of a 198-member National Assembly which stated 100 additional assembly seats would be reserved for northerners if they decided to hold UNTCOK-backed elections. That southern process yielded in July 1948 the selection of Syngman Rhee as the ROK's first president, followed by the announcement to the world on August 15<sup>th</sup> -- the anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan -- the formal creation of the Republic of Korea.

Although the northern Koreans followed up on those events by creating the DPRK in September 1948 as a separate state and government, they ostensibly did this of necessity and under duress. This positioned the North Koreans to be able to claim that the ROK and the United States had used the UNTCOK elections to divide Korea formally and that they in the north actually were more committed to a unified Korea. In reality, the approach the United States had taken via UNTCOK was a good example of very early U.S. support for a unified Korean nation state's creation via peninsula-wide elections. Had the United States known at that point that what would become the Korean War was not too far over the horizon, it is arguable that the United States would have pushed even harder or more creatively for elections that would have unified Korea.<sup>2</sup> The origins and nature of the Korean War have drawn careful scholarly attention in the United States.<sup>3</sup> From an American policy perspective the Korean War has a mixed legacy of controversy, success, and perpetual debate about when and how it shall be formally terminated. There are various causes of controversy pertaining to the Korean War's merit, including referring to it as a "war" when there never was a U.S. congressional declaration of war regarding what can also be perceived as a Korean civil war, as a major example of U.S. interventionism, and one of a series of U.S. involvements in questionable or unnecessary wars throughout the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. The origins of the Korean War in terms of inter-Korean border frictions and nascent U.S.-Soviet Cold War tensions raised many questions about how it could have been prevented had the United States paid more attention to what was going on and, possibly, to helping the ROK become less vulnerable. After the Korean War erupted and the United States became entangled in it, how it was waged, how it dragged on, and how it was halted via an armistice, all became controversial in the United States as they occurred. Although a strong case can be, and should be, made that the Korean War became an asset for how the United States pursued the Cold War in Asia -- in terms of clarifying where the United States stood *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union and Communist China -- and in terms of how the post-armistice U.S.-ROK relationship proved advantageous for the United States because of the ways the ROK evolved politically, economically, and strategically, it remains a controversial war because of how it can be linked to other questionable wars in its wake. Had the ROK back in 1948-1950 been remotely the sort of country that it is today -- thanks to what the United States did during and after the

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2. For background on that early period in U.S. policy toward Korea, from an early perspective, see Meade (1951).

3. For solid examples, see Henderson (1968); Cumings (1981); Matray (1984); and Foot (1985).

Korean War -- virtually no one would be raising the serious questions about the Korean War's merits. Nonetheless, that controversial legacy remains a policy issue.

The U.S.-ROK security relationship clearly was transformed by the Korean War. The post-armistice U.S.-ROK Mutual Security Treaty (July 27, 1953) put the ROK loosely in the same cluster as Japan and other Cold War era U.S. allies worldwide. It also solidified the adversarial nature of U.S.-DPRK relations. The United States' relations with the two Koreas -- one ally, one adversary -- equally clearly was influenced by how the Cold War evolved. When the United States experienced setbacks due to dire events in ending the Vietnam War with South Vietnam's loss in 1975 and when the United States incrementally normalized its relations with the PRC throughout the 1970s -- fully meeting that goal in 1979 -- the tone of the Cold War changed in ways that sent signals to both the ROK and the DPRK about how geopolitical circumstances can evolve in ways to which both Korean governments must pay close attention. Far more salient for both Korean states was the way events of the 1970s and 1980s caused the Cold War to erode from the USSR's perspective leading to a G. H. W. Bush-Gorbachev meeting on Malta in December 1989 where they declared an end to the Cold War, which was followed in a couple of years by the Soviet Union's collapse and the reappearance of the Russian state the world has been adjusting to over time.<sup>4</sup>

As crucial as those changes were for both Korean states and for U.S. policy toward both of them, an issue which proved to be more emotionally meaningful for both Koreas was how those Cold War changes influenced relations between East and West Germany leading to the symbolically important fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and subsequent collapse of East Germany which merged with West Germany with pan-German elections in December 1990. While this had major consequences for U.S.-German relations,<sup>5</sup> more important for present purposes was how German reunification would be perceived by Koreans -- North and South. A significant example was the way South Korea which had originally used the West German "Ostpolitik" policy toward East Germany as a paradigm to fashion a "Nordpolitik" for the ROK which it initially used to cultivate ties with the USSR and the PRC at North Korea's expense. This enabled the ROK to weaken the DPRK's connections with those countries at the same time as the ROK was showing that it was not under the United States' diplomatic control, thereby underscoring South Korean independence and bolstering the ROK's stature within the U.S.-Japan-ROK triangular strategic relationship. That dynamic was seriously changed by the Cold War's end coupled with Germany's reunification. This combination caused Koreans in both Koreas to reassess the changed international system's reaction to German reunification and how this could influence Korean prospects for unification. Both Koreas had to pay more serious attention to how each side in the divided nation might learn lessons from Germany's reunification and what options each Korea might pursue that could influence the policies of the major powers with a stake in Korea's future.<sup>6</sup> This situation was altered in ambiguous ways by how both Korean states ended up formally joining the United Nations in September 1991 which gave both governments additional stature and access to international dialogue venues, but also underscored each Korea's separate identity.

All of this affected the inter-Korean relationship and how the major powers would try to deal with it. Both Koreas throughout the 1990s tried to utilize their perceived assets and image to each's advantage in their bilateral relations and in each's role multilaterally. For South Korea this tended toward creative use of soft power *vis-à-vis* the DPRK and seeking international understanding of the merits of that approach. For North Korea the circum-

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4. For background on those major events, see LaFeber (2006) and Hogan (1992).

5. For background on that issue, see Ninkovich (1995).

6. For insights into that issue, see Kwak and Joo (2003).



stances caused them to try to make the best out of soft power offerings from other countries and the United Nations, but also to make use of other countries' concerns about the DPRK's potentials to expand its military power -- most obviously on the nuclear weapons front -- and its willingness to resort to hard power. The ROK's approach was maximized by the Kim Dae-jung administration's Sunshine Policy overtures toward North Korea and his prominent June 2000 summit diplomacy with Kim Jong-il<sup>7</sup> which helped President Kim earn the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000 for his meaningful efforts to develop a constructive dialogue with the DPRK. On the other side North Korea's ambiguous responses to the ROK's dialogue attempts were underscored by how the DPRK used its nuclear weapons option to maximize its geopolitical clout in ways that contributed to what amounted to cultivation of a neo-Cold War context that could permit North Korea to make use of other countries' uncertainties and anxieties about North Korea's capabilities and intentions.

While all the countries involved in dealing with these developments warrant attention, for present purposes the focus shall be on how the United States prior to the 9/11/2001 crisis dealt with the "soft" versus "hard" approaches of the two Koreas and their impact on any prospects for reunification. The Clinton administration made use of the legacy of the G. H. W. Bush administration's successes in the Gulf War to play an internationalist American card, but it also played that card in a Wilsonian interventionist manner in Bosnia and Kosovo. Consequently there was a blend of a post-Cold War "peace dividend" and playing various U.S. war cards. Because this generated tensions in DPRK-U.S. relations that came close to open conflict in early 1994, and was avoided thanks to former president Jimmy Carter's diplomacy in June of 1994, the United States ended up pursuing a blend of policies that were not received very well by South Korean liberal-progressives who were more motivated by desires to reconcile the two Koreas than the Clinton administration's desires to prevent North Korea from taking advantage of the inter-Korean dialogue process. Nonetheless, the United States did make positive use of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) and multilateral talks -- especially the Six-Party Talks (U.S., PRC, Japan, Russia, and the two Koreas) to reach tentative agreements on nuclear issues that ended up keeping a de facto lid on North Korea's nuclear agenda, albeit a "lid" that the DPRK continued to tamper with. Because of that tampering and subsequent U.S. responses to hold back on agreements it had made with North Korea to make concessions, both the DPRK and the United States criticized each other that they were not doing what they had promised to do. As important as all those issues were to all the six countries engaged in the "talks," from a U.S. perspective the way the nuclear weapons issue drew major American attention in policy circles<sup>8</sup> was symbolic in the sense that many more Americans interested in U.S. foreign policy were paying serious attention to Korean affairs, but not nearly as many Americans were using that policy agenda to focus on inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification.<sup>9</sup> That situation ended up having a major impact on the theme addressed in the previous section of this analysis, namely the historical legacy of U.S. policy toward Korea upon today's policy.

#### **IV. The Post-9/11 Context of U.S. Policy toward the Two Koreas and Bush Administration Policies**

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7. For interesting coverage of that event, see *The Economist*, April 15, 2000.

8. For a cross-section of American perspectives on the North Korean nuclear issue in the 1990s, see Mazarr (1995); Kihl and Hayes (1997); Segal (1998); and Moltz and Mansourov (2000).

9. For a major example, see Harrison (2002). The author also contributed to the debate over that policy agenda in his, Olsen (2002c), which was translated into Korean as *Hanmi Kwangae ui Sae Jipyung* (2003a).

Overall U.S. foreign and defense policies have experienced several major geopolitical turning points -- notably the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, the two "World Wars," and the Cold War. In these instances and other lesser conflicts only a few one day events stand out as decisive in those turning points. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor stands out in that regard. For contemporary Americans a strong case can be made that the three September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks -- i.e. "9/11" -- collectively are widely perceived as the United States' decisive turning point which shapes what Americans need to do to deal with protection of the United States for the foreseeable future in the 21st century. The 9/11 events led the United States under the G. W. Bush administration to launch a Global War on Terror (GWOT) and become involved in strengthening U.S. homeland security as well as to wage warfare on adversaries in situations deemed connected to the GWOT. Because of the importance of this issue, as well as the controversy some of the warfare generated among numerous Americans, these issues have received considerable scholarly attention.<sup>10</sup>

Although the United States' struggle to cope with Islamic terrorists initially had nothing to do with the situation on the Korean peninsula, since neither Korea is part of the Islamic community extending from the Middle East and Northern Africa to South, Southeast, and Central Asia, it did not take long for both Koreas to become entangled in the GWOT. For the ROK, as well as many other existing U.S. allies, it was virtually automatic to side with the United States in its GWOT. South Korea also had to adapt to the ways the United States was compelled to reassess its global security priorities and its defense budget priorities that compelled American leaders to evaluate whether or not U.S. obligations to other security commitments would have to be adjusted or even terminated.<sup>11</sup> Even though the post-9/11 context injected significant tensions into how South Korea would have to cope with American reappraisals, some other countries allied to the United States that did not confront obvious adversaries had more problems in retaining high levels of U.S. strategic support in the post-9/11 environment. Because of the nature of North Korea's long-standing adversarial relations with South Korea, the ROK ultimately ended up benefiting in its bilateral ROK-U.S. security ties from persistent American news of the dangers posed by the DPRK to South Korea,<sup>12</sup> Japan, and the United States' strategic commitments to both allies and to all of their interests in Asian regional stability.

To a certain extent all of that was relatively predictable and drew upon the legacy of U.S. concerns about the threat posed by North Korea. Had that perspective been the totality of how the United States perceived the DPRK in a post-9/11 context, the situation arguably would have remained relatively stable. However, because of the way President Bush included North Korea -- along with Iraq and Iran -- in the "axis of evil" in his January 29, 2002 State of the Union speech<sup>13</sup> that drew considerable criticism,<sup>14</sup> it made the post-9/11 Bush doctrine of preemptive war presented at President Bush's June 1, 2002 commencement speech at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point which was focused on various threatening countries<sup>15</sup> particularly relevant for U.S. policy toward North Korea because of the nature of its government's tendency toward reckless brinkmanship. In effect, what North Korea was doing in a provocative manner was the DPRK's way to pursue a form of deterrence that was as much based on a cross-cultural gap and psychological anxieties as it was on possessing proven forms of military power.

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10. For useful examples, see Woodward (2003); Clarke (2004); and Stiglitz and Bilmes (2008).

11. For an assessment of such issues, see Levin (2004).

12. For an assessment of the strategic changes, see Cho (2006).

13. For coverage of the speech, see Sanger (2002) and Young (2002).

14. For examples, see Abramowitz and Laney (2002), opinion page; and Plate (2002), opinion page. See also, Olsen (2002b).

15. For critical insights into the dangers of the preemptive war Bush doctrine, including its problems *vis-à-vis* North Korea, see Eland (2004: 210-215).

In the early phase of the Bush administration's post-9/11 policies -- during his first term as president -- U.S. security policies were very hawkish and assertive. This has long been accurately attributed to the neo-Wilsonian interventionism embodied by the neo-conservative political group in U.S. society who have been widely and deservedly criticized by U.S. traditional conservatives,<sup>16</sup> causing a rupture in the supposed conservative community.<sup>17</sup> That hawkish approach was applied with enthusiasm to U.S. policy toward North Korea's nuclear agenda throughout the first Bush term and into the second term in office. Although its advocates were enthusiastic about blocking North Korea's agenda and possibly causing regime change in Pyongyang,<sup>18</sup> such U.S. hawkishness caused significant problems in the U.S.-ROK relationship during President Roh Moo-hyun's time in office because of the nuclear issue and Bush administration pressures on the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) launched in May 2003.<sup>19</sup> How the United States dealt with North Korea's nuclear agenda in the context of the GWOT initially did not have much success and the evolution of policies on both sides understandably drew considerable scholarly attention.<sup>20</sup> Ironically, the more North Korea also used its hawkishness to escalate its nuclear agenda via what was widely perceived as a nuclear bomb test, October 9, 2006,<sup>21</sup> the more it created incentives for negotiations with the United States and via the Six Party Talks to get back on track. That happened swiftly, albeit on tracks that proved to be bumpy at times, threatening to derail the processes again.

The first example of relative -- but modest -- success in Bush's second term occurred in February 2007 thanks to diplomatic efforts by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the United States chief negotiator with North Korea, Assistant Secretary Christopher Hill, to get North Korea to agree to more inspections.<sup>22</sup> That process continued, leading to a significant U.S.-DPRK agreement in October 2007 on what sort of a dialogue agenda they should pursue in the following months. The agreement and the U.S.-DPRK diplomatic process drew considerable attention, raising hopes for progress.<sup>23</sup> It also drew predictable neo-conservative criticism.<sup>24</sup> As the U.S.-DPRK talks made progress plans were agreed upon in May 2008 and carried out in June 2008 for North Korea to provide detailed data about its plutonium reprocessing program and to publicly destroy part of its Yongbyon nuclear facility in exchange for the United States to remove the DPRK from the United States' list of state sponsors of terrorism which would be symbolically important in terms of altering the Axis of Evil paradigm, but even more important in terms of making it more feasible for the Americans to have more extensive contacts with North Korean counterparts.<sup>25</sup> Although these arrangements were widely perceived as significant progress, follow-up movement stalled because of doubts on both sides that the other side was doing what it had committed to do about the nuclear program and the terrorist list. This atmosphere caused concerns that the arrangements might not last.<sup>26</sup> Fortunately the Bush ad-

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16. For an excellent example, see Buchanan (2004). See also, Dorrien (2004) and Mann (2004).

17. For a defense of neo-conservatism see a book by contributing editor of *The Weekly Standard*, Stelzer (2004).

18. For prominent examples of such advocacy, see McCain (2003) and Eberstadt (2004).

19. For assessments of those problems, see Levin (2004) and Steinberg (2005). For coverage of the PSI's impact, see Valencia (2007).

20. For detailed assessments of that evolution, see Cha and Kang (2003) and Schoff et al. (2008). See also, the author's more detailed assessments: Olsen (2006, 2007b).

21. For coverage of that event and reactions, see Ramberg (2006a, 2006b).

22. For coverage of the agreement, see Ford and Kirk (2007a, 2007b). For coverage of how the U.S. approach to North Korea began to change, see Sanger and Shonker (2007); Ramstad and King (2007). For a broader assessment of the Bush administration's policymaking changes on North Korea, see Chinoy (2008).

23. For coverage of both, see Kessler (2007c) and Kirk (2007).

24. See Bolton (2007).

25. For coverage of North Korea's cooperative activities, see Kessler (2008c); Cooper (2008a); Ramstad (2008); and Choe (2008).

26. For coverage of these developments, see Eggen (2008); Harden (2008); Solomon (2008b); Kirk (2008); and Myers and Sciolino (2008).

ministration, facing its final months in office, and with U.S. national elections on the near term horizon made a major effort to adjust its policy and send the kind of signals to North Korea that would get it to do what the United States desired.<sup>27</sup> As of this writing it appears to have worked in terms of taking the DPRK off the United States' terrorist list and inducing North Korea to return to the process of scaling back its nuclear program.<sup>28</sup>

Hopefully this progress on the post-9/11 issues, coming in the wake of the more hawkish U.S. approach earlier in the Bush administration, will leave a framework legacy for President Bush's successor in the White House. This would obviously have ramifications for U.S.-DPRK relations on the nuclear front, but those ramifications also could have significant consequences for U.S. relations with both Korean governments and for their relations with each other on the inter-Korean dialogue front. In short, how well or poorly the United States handles this sensitive set of issues can readily have repercussions for the legacy issues raised previously and for how well the United States will be positioned to cope with the challenges likely to be posed by the two Koreas' evolution and how they may become one Korea again. That shall be shaped by how the successor administration deals with all these issues and how it and its successors deal with a range of options on several policy fronts. Those topics shall be assessed in the remaining sections of this analysis.

## **V. Coping with a Post-Bush Geopolitical Context for U.S. Policy Makers: The Spectrum of Alternatives**

As the United States has experienced a very contentious presidential campaign in 2007-2008, including the primary campaigns in selecting political parties' presidential nominees, it became very obvious that this electoral contest would be extraordinarily politicized. The contest for the American electorate's selection of President Bush's successor is important for the topic being assessed in this section because the post-Bush geopolitical context's spectrum of policy alternatives almost certainly will be overshadowed by the politicization of American perceptions of geopolitics. President Bush's controversial record in overall foreign affairs has divided the ranks of conservatives in ways that call critical attention to his would-be Republican successor who shall be assessed below. Although President Bush's foreign policy has received much praise from many neo-conservatives,<sup>29</sup> many genuine conservatives have been very critical of his record. For example traditional conservative pundit Pat Buchanan, when comparing George W. Bush to his father George H. W. Bush said of the incumbent president "as a statesman and world leader, he could not carry the old man's loafers" (Buchanan, 2008a). And a prominent libertarian conservative analyst, Ivan Eland, who ranked four other U.S. presidents as worse than President Bush (Polk, McKinley, Wilson, and Truman) nonetheless described him as "a horrible president and ... one of the worst in U.S. history" (Eland, 2008). The transition from Bush to his successor also is marked by the way his foreign policy problems have been overshadowed by how the financial crisis in the U.S. economy which escalated on the eve of the U.S. national elections has damaged the United States' global leadership capabilities, causing one of Bush's prominent conservative academic critics, Andrew Bacevich, to state "The ongoing crisis on Wall Street has now, in effect, ended the Bush presidency" (Bacevich, 2008b).

Against this Bush background, a lot of attention has been paid in the major media to

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27. For assessments of U.S. efforts, see Kessler (2008b); Cooper (2008b); Richter and Glionna (2008); and *Economist*, October 18, 2008.

28. For coverage of the results, see Kessler (2008a) and Kirk (2008b).

29. For example, see Kagen (2008).

how either one of Bush's successors will have to cope with a serious set of foreign policy problems<sup>30</sup> and get their economic agendas in harmony with their broader range of policies, including foreign policy.<sup>31</sup> Both of the major party candidates to replace President Bush -- Democratic Senator Barack Obama and Republican Senator John McCain -- while they were still in their parties' primary race for the nomination made serious written efforts to present their foreign policy agenda.<sup>32</sup>

One of Senator McCain's major campaign arguments against Senator Obama was that McCain has had far more experience in foreign and defense affairs than Obama. In terms of the comparative length of service each had in government McCain's point was affirmed by nearly all observers, but the policy positions he has supported drew significant criticism. It is not surprising that the political left would criticize McCain,<sup>33</sup> but a mainstream magazine like *The Economist's* reference to McCain as a "warmonger" for "many Americans"<sup>34</sup> is a bit surprising. McCain's real vulnerability on the foreign policy front that probably would create problems for his administration's foreign and defense policy agenda is how several prominent conservative analysts critically described McCain. Pat Buchanan characterized McCain's main foreign policy advisor -- neo-conservative Randy Scheunemann -- as an "unpatriotic conservative" (Buchanan, 2008b). Similarly, well-known mainstream conservative columnist George F. Will said that because of McCain's "boiling moralism" he "is not suited to the presidency" (Will, 2008). More predictably libertarian conservatives have harshly criticized McCain's foreign policy goals. For example Leon Hadar, from the Cato Institute, relabeled neo-conservatism "neo-McCainism" (Hadar, 2008) and Doug Bandow described McCain as "the crazy warmonger from Arizona" (Bandow, 2008). Obviously, finding Senator Obama's supporters on the United States liberal-left does not come as a surprise.<sup>35</sup> More surprising are the ways some conservative critics of McCain are willing to explore the positive aspects of Obama's foreign policy parameters.<sup>36</sup>

The contest between McCain and Obama which would yield the next U.S. president obviously has had salience for all regions of the world. For present purposes, however, a brief survey of how their campaigns relate to Asia, and specifically to Korea, is worthwhile. Both campaigns were well aware of what impact each's victory would entail in terms of various Asian countries' expectations about U.S. policy in the post-Bush administration.<sup>37</sup> Both McCain and Obama reached out to spread the word about what each's administration would plan to do *vis-à-vis* Asia.<sup>38</sup> One of the background issues Senator Obama used was his childhood residence in Indonesia, although he does not dwell on that too much because of the Muslim school he attended as a Christian child and how that can contribute to the McCain campaign's making use of some in the U.S. electorate who choose to identify Obama as a Muslim because of that history and because his middle name is Hussein. In a strange way, however, Senator Obama's family name oddly drew him some positive overseas support in Japan during the primaries when a pro-Obama support group was created in Western Japan on the Japan Sea/ East Sea where there is a small city called

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30. For analytical insights into this see (former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and current chair of the Asia Society) Holbrooke (2008); and Zakaria (2008).

31. For a comparison of how Senators McCain and Obama differ on economic issues, see *The Economist*, July 26, 2008.

32. See Obama (2007) and McCain (2007). See also, Democratic Party candidate Obama (2008).

33. See, for example, the foreign policy analysis of Dreyfuss (2008b).

34. In a *Leaders* column titled "Bring back the real McCain," *The Economist*, August 30, 2008.

35. For a relatively balanced and insightful example, see Dreyfuss (2008a).

36. For examples, see Bandow (2008 op. cit.); Bacevich (2008a); and Carpenter (2008a).

37. For coverage of those expectations, see Montlake (2008).

38. For an example in a Korea-based journal, see two articles on the rival campaign goals: Gross (2008) and Green (2008).

Obama, Japan. Many in that area and elsewhere in Japan were attracted to the possibility that the next U.S. president might bear a name identical with a Japanese city.<sup>39</sup>

With regard to U.S. policy toward Korea Senators Obama and McCain earned a reputation in Korea for holding very different positions on certain key issues. On the bilateral economic front Obama has been critical of the U.S.-ROK Free Trade Agreement because of its negative impact on the United States during the contemporary economic crisis, whereas McCain wants to back the principles of free trade. On the North Korean nuclear issue, Obama was very supportive of using creative negotiations whereas McCain remained very hawkish and reluctant to engage in accommodating talks. And on the U.S.-ROK security alliance issue, Obama wants to improve some of the areas of U.S.-ROK tensions whereas McCain wants the alliance to be steadfast against perceived regional threats.<sup>40</sup> McCain's position on North Korea, in particular, has been in the past<sup>41</sup> and remains to the contemporary era<sup>42</sup> very hawkish. This has caused concerns about a McCain administration being willing to pursue DPRK regime change or being willing to use a preemptive attack strategy against North Korea. The two candidates' reactions to the U.S.-DPRK updated nuclear deal and removal of North Korea from the international terrorists list were strikingly different because Obama supported enhanced negotiations in ways that McCain criticized as naïve and prone to capitulation.<sup>43</sup> McCain's position on that issue resonated with the criticism of the agreement by John Bolton, a prominent neo-conservative activist (Bolton, 2008).

These differences between the two candidates indicated how each's prospective administration would likely pursue U.S. relations with North Korea over the nuclear issue. In turn those two alternative approaches would have an impact on how U.S.-ROK relations would evolve, how overall U.S.-Korea relations would have an impact on U.S. relations with the Korean peninsula's neighbors, and -- over the longer term -- how the United States might deal with Korea's reunification. It is clear that candidate Obama was more inclined to be flexible regarding these issues -- especially *vis-à-vis* U.S. negotiations with North Korea<sup>44</sup> -- whereas candidate McCain was more inclined to a hard-line approach.

Now that the U.S. national elections are over and President-elect Obama is getting ready to take office in 2009,<sup>45</sup> it is relatively clear that the two Korean governments shall have to adjust to how his administration may deal with each Korea's conditions, with the inter-Korean dialogue process, and with each Korea's strategic priorities. In a preliminary sense it was notable that the South Korean press' coverage on November 5, 2008 (the day after the U.S. elections) of Obama's victory and its political meaning for the ROK was substantial in contrast to North Korea's KCNA website which did not mention the U.S. elections or Obama.<sup>46</sup> The South Korean coverage was extensive, including an ambivalent assessment of how Obama might deal with both Koreas (Hwang, 2008), concern that Obama might be protectionist toward the ROK economy (Ha, 2008a), questioning whether Obama may put pressure on the ROK role as a U.S. ally (Jung, 2008), and hopes that Obama would not make major changes in U.S. policy toward North Korea (Kim, 2008 and Takahashi, 2008). After that initial round of South Korean ambivalent positivism, ROK Unification Minister Kim Ha-joong was much more optimistic about Obama's policies toward inter-

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39. For coverage of that odd development, see Onishi (2008).

40. For coverage of those three issues, see Ha (2008b).

41. For his position on regime change that can apply to North Korea, see McCain (2003).

42. For background on how McCain's hawkishness *vis-à-vis* countries including North Korea evolved over time to the contemporary era, see Carpenter (2008b).

43. For an assessment of how McCain and Obama differ on these policies, see Solomon (2008a).

44. For a supportive opinion column about Obama by a South Korean analyst, see B. Lee (2008). And for coverage of Obama's expectation regarding North Korea, see Kang (2008).

45. For American press coverage of the US presidential elections, see Barnes and Shear (2008); Parker (2008); and Cowell (2008).

46. See *Korean News*, November 5, 2008 Juche 97, ([[www.kcna.co.jp/e-news.htm](http://www.kcna.co.jp/e-news.htm)]). See also, Unattributed (2008b).

Korean issues (Unattributed, 2008a). Similarly, South Korean Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon also was optimistic about Obama (*Ibid.*, 2008c). If President Obama actually pursues a U.S.-North Korea dialogue of the sort which was mentioned during his campaign that would certainly create a new dimension for overall U.S.-Korean relations and probably would compel both the DPRK and ROK to respond. One can only hope that their responses would be positive, helping to improve the prospects for peace on the peninsula.

## VI. U.S. Policy Options for Dealing with Inter-Korean Issues

The United States' policies toward the ROK and DPRK as separate states, toward the Korean peninsula regionally, and toward the future of inter-Korean dynamics are likely to deal with a spectrum of options that shall be briefly assessed in the sub-sections of this section. The options that shall be assessed are not focused solely on the parameters of the Bush and Obama governments, but on the general issue of U.S. national interests regarding these topics. The options raised draw on a broad scope of existing governmental and scholarly materials well known to those who pay attention to U.S.-Korean relations that do not require detailed citations for the succinct format utilized in this section.<sup>47</sup> Following the assessment of those options, the following section shall offer some specific recommendations about how U.S. policy can be improved.

### A. U.S. Options for Bilateral Relations

United States policy options toward the two Koreas and their interactions within the pair rather clearly deal with them in a manner which was well labeled by a recent "special report" by *The Economist* which referred to the ROK and the DPRK as "the odd couple."<sup>48</sup> On the U.S.-ROK portion of the spectrum, the United States faces choices ranging from: 1) perpetuating the existing bilateral security, political, and economic relationships by underscoring each side's reasons to keep things as they are, to 2) either strengthening each of those relationships by emphasizing reasons for both sides to do more for the partnership or 3) scaling back each of those relationships because the partners either cannot or do not want to pursue #1 or #2. If the United States and the ROK opt to retain, expand, or shrink the existing bilateral paradigm both sides shall have to make a case for this option domestically and internationally -- including to the DPRK. Although both the United States and the ROK are likely to make whatever case they opt to pursue based on each country's perceived national interests, in reality both shall also be influenced by how each understands the incentives to pursue one of these options shaped by their roles in the international system. The logic behind each of these options is fairly obvious. Preserving status quo type bilateral bonds would attract many who are comfortable with things as they are. Strengthening bilateral relationships would appeal to those on both sides who see it as desirable or necessary because of what exists in the United States and the ROK and the peninsular and/or regional challenges each expects to confront. Reducing the relationships could appeal to either or both the United States and the ROK because of changed circumstances within either or both countries or because of external pressures upon either or both partners to alter their basic security, political, or economic relationships within the interna-

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47. For readers who would like to peruse detailed lists of such citations regarding US policy toward various Korean issues, the following volumes are useful: Steinberg (2005); Lee (2006); and Feffer (2006). The following studies by the author may also be useful: Olsen (1988, 2002a, 2005a, 2008).

48. A special report on the Koreas, *The Economist*, September 27, 2008.

tional community. While all three of these U.S.-ROK options can entail complexities in devising and implementing a given option, they are relatively simple when compared to the U.S.-DPRK situation.

The United States and North Korea's adversarial bilateral relationship confronts the same sort of tri-level options as the U.S.-ROK relationship does. In short, the United States and North Korea can choose to 1) keep things more or less as they are, 2) keep them as they are while doing more on each side, or 3) keep them as they are while doing less. Unlike the U.S.-ROK set of options where no credible policy analyst on either side proffers options that would entail one or both of the partners advocating optional changes which would be based on perceiving the existing partner as an evolving threat now or in the future, in the U.S.-DPRK option situation radically different alternatives have to be considered. On the worst case end of the spectrum the United States and the DPRK have to deal with an option that would enable each side to cope with full-fledged warfare. Despite the high probability that the United States would prevail in such a war, such an option is no more desirable for the United States than it is for the DPRK<sup>49</sup> because of the attendant high risks and costs. Although it would not be nearly as calamitous or costly, both the United States and the DPRK also have to consider an option based on having to deal with what is widely referred to as North Korea becoming a failed state causing its collapse.<sup>50</sup> In contrast to North Korea's position of rejecting any option that entails the DPRK's collapse, the United States has to consider an option preparing the United States and the ROK to cope with North Korea's abject collapse. The United States also can use an option entailing U.S. assistance to North Korea helping it avoid a collapse scenario. Although such an option has intrinsic merits in terms of its goal, almost certainly a U.S. decision to enter into a cooperative-supportive relationship with the DPRK -- which could keep North Korea from collapsing in ways that would be damaging and costly to U.S.-ROK shared interests -- would be created by the United States for broader purposes.

Such an option's overarching interest would be to induce North Korea to engage in negotiations with the United States designed to get North Korea to significantly alter -- preferably eliminate -- its adversarial militaristic policies aimed at the U.S.-ROK relationship in exchange for U.S. soft power diplomacy with North Korea intended to create harmonious cooperation on a broad spectrum of issues that would fundamentally improve the U.S.-DPRK relationship. In that context, one must bear in mind how Senator Obama -- very much unlike Senator McCain -- during the 2008 presidential campaign had expressed willingness to meet directly with leaders of hostile countries -- including the DPRK's Kim Jong-il -- that was received well in both Koreas.<sup>51</sup> Whether such a dialogue becomes credible in the Obama administration remains to be seen, but it has to remain on the U.S. options list. Albeit further down a possible options list, the United States also can consider -- and work with the ROK to pursue -- the option of creating a ROK-DPRK peace treaty that would formally end the Korean War and put the armistice in the past. Success with that option would open the door for another U.S. option -- namely a U.S.-DPRK treaty normalizing their bilateral relations with diplomatic recognition and embassies in each capital. Even further down on a possible options list could be a U.S. option, after diplomatic recognition is achieved, to consider a U.S.-DPRK security treaty relationship. More likely than that option, however, would be a U.S. option to support inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification which shall be assessed in more detail below.

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49. For an assessment of North Korea's anxiety about the United States' capabilities, see Beal (2005).

50. For a useful assessment of North Korean anxieties about remaining viable, see Kihl and Kim (2006).

51. For prominent South Korean coverage of that prospect, see the analysis by former ROK Minister of Unification Park (2008).



## ***B. U.S. Options for Multilateral Relations***

Concurrent with U.S. consideration of its options *vis-a-vis* the ROK and the DPRK, the United States also has to consider how U.S. policy toward Korea is influenced by U.S. relations with China, Japan, and Russia as well as each of those country's relations with the two Korean governments. Similar to the United States' basic options *vis-à-vis* South Korea, the United States can: 1) try to maintain the current sort of relations that exist between the ROK and DPRK with their three regional neighbors,<sup>52</sup> 2) pursue an option that would encourage one, two, or three of the peninsula's neighbors to strengthen each's relationships with the two Koreas, or 3) pursue an option that would permit the United States to strengthen its bonds with both Koreas at the expense of some or all of the neighbors.

Because of the nature of U.S. relations with all three of the Korean peninsula's neighbors the United States also would have to explore available options in U.S.-Japan, U.S.-PRC, and U.S.-Russia relations with regard to getting their assistance and/or discouraging their animosity toward the United States' broader policy agendas regarding U.S. bilateral ties with each Korea and U.S. objectives regarding Korea's long-term future. In that same realm the United States also will have to consider options enabling the United States to cope with the possibility that one of Korea's three neighbors may become regionally hegemonic -- in either a positive or negative manner. Were that to occur, the United States' options would range from accepting and working with such a regional power or pursuing an alternative option designed to help Korea and one or two of its neighbors resist such hegemonism by such a power. Related to that option would be options the United States may consider throughout Asia -- South, Southeast, and Central -- in addition to Northeast in order to cope with such regional hegemonism. Conversely, were the United States' global power to deteriorate because of such possibilities as a loss of geopolitical stature due to shifts in the global economic system, the United States would have to consider another spectrum of options *vis-à-vis* Korea and its neighbors -- as well as in other regions of the world -- designed to bolster the United States' network of support needed to compensate for the relative decline in its geo-economic stature resulting from such events.

The United States also would have to consider the options that might need to be considered were any of the Korean peninsula's neighbors to decide to play a meaningful regional role in inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification. Those options would include lending the United States' support to the process or abstaining from it either because the United States developed reasons to dissent from the process or because the United States discovered it was unable to provide meaningful assistance. That issue helps set the stage for the next optional topic.

## ***C. U.S. Options on Korean Unification***

Aside from possibly taking a stand on other countries' involvement in a Korean unification process, the United States also probably shall have to create options for U.S. policy toward inter-Korean reconciliation and national reunification. This spectrum of options would have to include three broad categories, with a support or opposition option in each category. Two of the categories would involve U.S. policy toward a significant unification proposal from either the ROK or the DPRK, leading the United States to assess the proposal and then either lend its support or to try to block it. Obviously either or those reactions should be carefully evaluated. The third optional category would involve a U.S. policy initiative in which the United States would develop a proposal for backing inter-

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52. The author explored those relations in comparison to U.S. relations with the two Koreas in, Olsen (2008).

Korean reconciliation and unification that could include diplomatic efforts, strategic calculations, and economic support. U.S. options on the unification front must of course be dealt with in the context of the previous categories of options -- bilateral and multilateral -- so that this category of options would be perceived as credible and desirable by the Korean recipients and by those in the U.S. foreign and defense policy community who are not Korean affairs specialists.

## **VII. Recommendations for U.S. Policy to Bolster Korean Peace Through Unification**

Although all the policy recommendations to be offered in this succinct concluding section are unlikely to be fully implemented in the relatively near term -- such as in the Obama administration taking office in 2009, over time they are likely to be perceived as increasingly salient to the effectiveness of U.S. policy toward Korea. When compared to U.S. policies toward either America's South Korean ally or its North Korean opponent on military, economic, and political issues which have drawn extensive attention within the U.S. government, at U.S. think tanks, and in academia, none of these entities have devoted truly major attention to the issue of Korean unification or to the United States' possible roles in that process. This does not mean or imply that nothing significant has been done regarding that topic by American specialists in Korean affairs. There have been significant scholarly studies in the United States on the topic.<sup>53</sup> The main point to be offered here is that the United States needs to do far more than it has done to improve its policy regarding inter-Korean relations.

One policy approach the United States could, and should, pursue vigorously is to learn from its South Korean ally's efforts to create an effective set of unification policies. One way the United States could have done that during the Kim Dae-jung and Rho Moo-hyun administrations would have been to adapt President Kim's "sunshine" paradigm and its successes to U.S. policy toward North Korea and -- over time -- to U.S. backing for Korean reunification.<sup>54</sup> To pursue such creative options on Korean unification more innovatively the United States would need to develop serious expertise on Korean unification and expand its ability to conduct pertinent research, hold more relevant conferences, and interact with both South Koreans and North Koreans in their own countries and have Korean experts in Korean unification from both Koreas participate in conferences and research projects in the United States. Arguably an excellent way to meet those structural goals would be to create a U.S.-based academic center for Korean unification studies.<sup>55</sup> Creation of such a "U.S. Center for Korean Unification Studies" is far more likely to receive support from an Obama administration because of its commitments to innovative "change" for U.S. policies in need of improvement than it would have been had a McCain administration been elected. One can only hope such support materializes swiftly in cooperation with relevant U.S. foundations. [CHECK AFTER 11/04]

Assuming such a "U.S. Center" can be created, however, it will take time for American specialists in Korean affairs to develop relevant programs, create useful connections with existing counterparts in the ROK and the DPRK, organize and host salient policy conferences and workshops, and publish useful analyses stemming from such activities. Moreover, and arguably most problematic, it would take even more time to develop the ability to

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53. A number of such studies are cited in analyses by the author noted below.

54. The author advocated that concept in greater detail: Olsen (2007a, 2003b). For more background on the sunshine policy, see Levin and Han (2003).

55. The author advocated that concept in more detail in: Olsen (2005b, 2005d).

generate a policy-oriented consensus among U.S. specialists in Korean affairs, U.S. foreign policy, and U.S. defense policy which would enable the United States to pursue better options in U.S. policy regarding inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification and their regional context. While one can hope that could be accomplished by the Obama administration, it is likely to remain an issue on the United States' policy agenda for quite some time. However long it might take, it also will be important for such a "U.S. Center" to work on the issues attendant to prospective U.S. relations with a Unified Korea in future generations. In conclusion of this recommendation, it is important to note that the creation of such a "U.S. Center" would not detract from the other policy option choices assessed previously. On the contrary, such a "U.S. Center" could be useful *vis-à-vis* those issues partially in terms of the research activities in which the Center would be involved, but mainly because the two Korean rivals would be well aware of how the United States -- an ally of one Korea and an adversary of the other Korea -- would be actively involved in a program intended to help both Koreas improve their inter-Korean relationship and prepare for the future of a United Korea.

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