



No. 90

July 14, 2010

## *The U.S.-South Korea Alliance Outdated, Unnecessary, and Dangerous*

*by Doug Bandow*

### **Executive Summary**

The United States has had a military relationship with the Republic of Korea (ROK) for 65 years. American forces partitioned the peninsula at the end of World War II, established the ROK as a new nation in 1948, rescued South Korea from invasion in 1950, and deployed as a permanent garrison after the conflict ended in 1953. U.S. troops remain to this day.

The Cold War ended long ago. Neither Moscow nor China is likely to back the so-called Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in any new aggressive war. The ROK has raced past North Korea on most measures of national power and

become a global economic leader. The entire *raison d'être* of the alliance has disappeared.

The recent sinking of the South Korean naval vessel *Cheonan* offers a stark reminder that, because of Washington's security guarantee, even a parochial quarrel between Seoul and Pyongyang could drag in the United States. The risk to America might have been warranted when the ROK was unable to defend itself and the Korean confrontation was tied to the Cold War, but there no longer is any cause to maintain a defense commitment that is all cost and no benefit to the United States.

*Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. A former special assistant to President Ronald Reagan, he is the author of Tripwire: Korea and U.S. Foreign Policy in a Changed World (Cato Institute) and co-author, with Ted Galen Carpenter, of The Korean Conundrum: America's Troubled Relations with North and South Korea (Palgrave/Macmillan).*

**The sinking of the *Cheonan*, a 1,200-ton corvette, on March 26 demonstrated that South Korea's most serious security challenges remain close to home.**

## **Introduction**

One of East Asia's ancient civilizations, Korea became a political battleground among China, Russia, and Japan during the 19th century. Korea eventually lost its independence to Tokyo, which turned the former into a colony in 1910. Japan's defeat in 1945 led the United States and Soviet Union to divide the peninsula along the 38th parallel. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) emerged in 1948. The DPRK's Kim Il-sung attempted to unify the peninsula by force two years later. Subsequent intervention by the United States and China led to military stalemate and an armistice in 1953.<sup>1</sup>

In that year, Washington initiated a "bilateral" security treaty, in reality a unilateral defense guarantee, and established a permanent troop presence. The DPRK has remained a malignant international actor. Over the years the Kim regime initiated a variety of military and terrorist attacks on both South Korean and American targets. However, since the downing of an ROK airliner in 1987, Pyongyang has largely eschewed blatant acts of war in favor of diplomatic brinkmanship. The *Cheonan* sinking may represent a worrisome change in strategy.

Although U.S. administrations reduced the number of troops stationed in South Korea over the years, the basic military commitment remained unchanged. American and ROK officials often promised greater South Korean defense self-reliance, but always in the future—a future that only resulted in additional promises.<sup>2</sup> The United States even retains wartime operational control of the Combined Forces Command, in which the vast majority of forces would be South Korean.

The ROK remains dependent on the United States today, despite vastly changed circumstances. Aggressive, hegemonic communism is gone. The North cannot count on support even from China in war, and South Korea is far stronger economically.

While continuing to rely on Washington for its own defense, South Korea has begun preparing its military, particularly the navy, for broader regional and even global contingencies. One of its core security objectives now is "enhancing competence and status internationally."<sup>3</sup> The ROK has become an active participant in international peacekeeping missions. As a result, the South has considered upgrading its current relationship with the United States to a "strategic alliance" devoted to international problems.

## **Back to Defense Basics with the *Cheonan***

And yet, while officials in Seoul have been planning to exercise greater global influence, Pyongyang apparently remains willing and able to threaten war. The sinking of the *Cheonan*, a 1,200-ton corvette, on March 26 demonstrated that South Korea's most serious security challenges remain closer to home.

After considering the possibilities that the *Cheonan* suffered from an accident or hit a mine, the ROK, in consultation with international experts, concluded that the cause was a Chinese-made torpedo fired by a North Korean submarine.<sup>4</sup> Why would the North sink a South Korean ship now?

It could be part of a campaign to redraw the contested boundary in the Yellow Sea.<sup>5</sup> It might be Kim-sanctioned retaliation for a naval clash last November in which a North Korean vessel apparently was damaged.<sup>6</sup> It could be an unauthorized military action, carried out by either rogue elements within or an increasingly influential leadership of the DPRK military, intended to prevent resumption of negotiations over Pyongyang's nuclear program. It might be an attempt by Kim Jong-il to frighten Seoul into renewing economic ties and aid reduced by the government of Lee Myung-bak.<sup>7</sup>

It could be intended to demonstrate that North Korea can strike with impunity. It might be a reward from Kim for the North Korean military, allowing embarrassed naval leaders to

avenge their loss last November, as he attempts to install his young son as his successor.<sup>8</sup> It could be an attempt to disrupt the South's economy and interfere with upcoming South Korean elections. Perhaps Pyongyang hoped to achieve several of these objectives.

When it announced its conclusion that North Korea sunk the *Cheonan*, Seoul offered no opinion as to why the North acted as it did. The ROK took its finding to the United Nations Security Council, banned North-South trade, and barred DPRK vessels from South Korean waters. The North responded with threatening rhetoric and announced that it planned to close the Kaesong industrial park, in which roughly 120 ROK firms were operating and 40,000 North Koreans were employed. So far Pyongyang has held off acting against Kaesong, but relations between the two Koreas nevertheless remain at their most tense level in years.

## The Negative Impact of the Alliance on South Korea

Throughout the controversy Seoul has consulted closely with Washington, as one would expect of alliance partners. The mutual defense treaty was negotiated in 1953, supposedly to make both the United States and the ROK more secure. Today, however, the alliance makes it more difficult for both countries to protect their interests when they see their interests differently.

South Korea is the most obvious beneficiary of the security relationship. However, when the South places its defense in Washington's hands it also places decisions over its defense in Washington's hands. That arrangement worked well for Seoul in the past, when the ROK could not survive independently of the United States. It will work far less well in the future, when the two nations' preferred policies are likely to increasingly differ.

After the *Cheonan* sinking, the Obama administration reportedly urged caution and restraint on Seoul. Such a posture was inevitable since the United States, with much

of its military tied down in Afghanistan and Iraq, could ill afford another war. From Washington's standpoint the Obama administration had reason to *insist* on a peaceful response. It would be folly for the United States to go to war over the sinking of the *Cheonan*.

It didn't matter that the act was criminal; it didn't matter that the deaths have greatly pained South Koreans; it didn't matter that Seoul might calculate the costs and benefits of a tough response differently. Washington's top priority is avoiding another conflict, one that likely would be costly, brutal, and bloody—and of no conceivable benefit to Americans.

Of course, the ROK has even greater reason to avoid war—its territory would be the battlefield. A number of South Koreans also appear to retain some sympathy for the North, despite its dismal record on human rights and most other issues.<sup>9</sup> In fact, polls taken after the incident show that a majority of South Koreans oppose military retaliation.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, some analysts point to evidence of regime weakness in North Korea.<sup>11</sup> That preserves the hope, so far forlorn, of a peaceful collapse of the Kim regime.

Nevertheless, the Seoul government could have reasonably believed that a larger conflict would ultimately become more likely if it did not respond militarily to the *Cheonan* sinking; to exhibit weakness in the face of the North's provocation could be more dangerous than a continued downward spiral in relations. If the Kim regime believed that the South would again give way, even after the sinking of a South Korean warship, Pyongyang might be tempted to stage additional and more dangerous military strikes. The risk of war would rise even more if the Kim regime found itself in crisis and various factions battled for control.

Although risky, there were numerous retaliatory options—seizing North Korean merchant vessels and bombing a North Korean naval installation are two obvious alternatives. Obviously, Seoul could decide that a military counter-strike would not be the best or even good policy. However, the alliance discouraged the ROK from considering such an approach even if the South Korean government and peo-

**After the *Cheonan* sinking, the Obama administration reportedly urged caution and restraint on Seoul.**

**The end of the Cold War has sharply diminished South Korea's security importance—relevance, even—to the United States.**

ple had believed military retaliation to be the best policy. In effect, where the positions diverge between the two countries, decisions over South Korea's security will still be made in Washington, not Seoul.

The unhealthy patron-client relationship that has developed has another insidious impact on the South. The ROK risks being drawn into conflicts caused by the United States—such as the Clinton administration's threat to attack North Korea in order to destroy the latter's nuclear program, the Bush administration's pressure for assistance in Afghanistan and Iraq, and a future administration's possible desire to use the ROK as a base of operations against other nations, most likely China.<sup>12</sup> Today Seoul faces painful humiliation at best and destructive war at worst as a result of decisions made by the U.S. government.

### **The Negative Impact of the Alliance on America**

The one-way alliance imposes an even greater burden on the United States. Bruce Bechtol of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College opines: "When it comes to combating North Korea's provocative acts on land and at sea, the best way to meet this challenge in my view is a strong ROK-U.S. military alliance."<sup>13</sup> Yet no one would ever point to "a strong ROK-U.S. military alliance" as the best way for the United States to meet the challenge posed by, say, China.

The South is a valued friend of the United States, with extensive cultural and economic ties between both peoples. However, the end of the Cold War has sharply diminished South Korea's security importance—relevance, even—to the United States. With no connection to a potentially aggressive Soviet Union (and, to a lesser extent, a virulently revolutionary China), North Korea is an irrelevant strategic backwater.

Pyongyang obviously poses no conventional military danger to the United States, other than to the 28,500 American troops currently and unnecessarily stationed in the

peninsula. One U.S. carrier group has more firepower than the entire DPRK military.

Even the North's embryonic nuclear program does not directly threaten the United States. Nothing suggests that Kim is suicidal: he wants to live well in this life. It is unlikely he would strike at the United States, even if he had the means, because the U.S. arsenal virtually assures retaliatory annihilation. The prospect of proliferation is worrisome, but again, Kim likely understands, or could be made to understand, the enormous risks he would take selling materials to nonstate actors that might target the United States.<sup>14</sup>

Washington still has an interest in denuclearizing the Korean peninsula, of course. But the presence of U.S. conventional forces only complicates an effort already facing extraordinary obstacles. The deployment provides Kim Jong-il with thousands of convenient American nuclear hostages. It is far better for Washington to promote nonproliferation in the region from a distance and with greater emphasis on the roles of South Korea, Japan, and especially China.<sup>15</sup>

In short, any renewed Korean conflict would be an enormous human tragedy but would have only limited impact on fundamental American security interests. Washington nevertheless is stuck in the center of Korean affairs today because of the U.S.-ROK alliance, which provides a security guarantee to South Korea with no corresponding benefit to the United States. Absent this relationship, there would be no U.S. troops on the Korean peninsula within range of North Korean attack, and no American promise to intervene in any war that might result from a provocation by Pyongyang or retaliation by the South.

The sinking of the *Cheonan* was an outrage, but it was an outrage against the ROK. While a *casus belli* in Seoul, the attack is no cause for war for the United States. The incident warranted an offer of diplomatic backing to a democratic friend, not the potential of military support if circumstances worsened.

Of course, everyone hopes the current controversy will be resolved without war. But the U.S. military felt the need to affirm that

American personnel had not been placed on a higher state of readiness. “They are engaged very routinely out there,” said Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>16</sup> Despite such assurances, war remains an uncomfortable possibility.<sup>17</sup>

It is one thing to tell the American people that thousands of their friends and family members might die to prevent a Soviet client from conquering a critical U.S. ally during a time of intense global political struggle. It’s quite another to explain that Americans must sacrifice their lives to exact revenge for an attack by a small, impoverished country on a U.S. ally, a nation that chooses to rely on Washington rather than adequately provide for its own defense.

## South Korea’s Actual Defense Needs

Seoul’s need for a U.S. security guarantee long ago disappeared. South Korea has upwards of 40 times the GDP of the North. The ROK also has a vast technological edge, twice the population, and a clearly superior international position.

Pyongyang is left with only the People’s Republic of China as a serious ally, and even the PRC is unlikely to intervene in any conflict now, in contrast to 1950. The ties between the PRC and South Korea have grown at an extraordinary rate. Today 50 times as many South Korean as North Korean students are studying in China. Chinese trade with the South is roughly 70 times the amount of that with the North.<sup>18</sup>

The DPRK does retain a numerical military edge in personnel and such weapons as tanks and artillery. This advantage is more menacing in appearance, however, than reality. Notes Larry Nicksch, recently retired from the Congressional Research Service, “exaggerating the North Korean military threat to South Korea” is a problem in both the United States and the ROK.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, the South, acting on the defense in favorable terrain, likely could defend itself

today—especially if it boosted its defense capabilities modestly in some key areas.<sup>20</sup> The North enjoys some areas of superiority, but, writes Nicksch, it is unlikely “that these asymmetric capabilities compensate North Korea for the substantial deterioration of its conventional military forces since the early 1990s—which went largely unacknowledged until the middle 2000s.”<sup>21</sup>

In fact, Seoul’s military is better equipped and better trained; it rests upon a far stronger industrial and larger population base. Moreover, the South is capable of spending as much as is necessary to overmatch Pyongyang. The ROK doesn’t do so because it doesn’t have to, since it can rely upon American defense subsidies.<sup>22</sup>

Some analysts contend that Pyongyang has adjusted its military tactics to fit its force inferiority. For instance, the North might hope to seize Seoul, located just south of the DMZ, and then negotiate a ceasefire.<sup>23</sup> No doubt South Korea should prepare for such a contingency. But, again, the responsibility for defending Seoul lies with the ROK, not the United States. The South should develop and deploy the forces and weapons necessary to thwart such an attempt.

Obviously, it would be expensive for Seoul to replicate U.S. military capabilities. According to South Korea’s Ministry of National Defense, U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) enable South Koreans to

reduce our defense spending, which contributes to our continued economic development. If we take into account all the equipment and materials that the USFK maintains in-country as well as the several billion dollars it spends on maintenance and operations, its opportunity cost is tremendous. If the USFK should be withdrawn, it would take an astronomical amount of additional defense expenditures to compensate for its absence.<sup>24</sup>

The argument that the South would need to undertake an “astronomical” increase in

**The South likely could defend itself today—especially if it boosted its defense capabilities modestly in some key areas.**

**Seoul does not need to replicate America's military to defeat the North's military.**

defense spending is, however, a self-serving exaggeration. Seoul does not need to replicate America's military to defeat the North's military. Notes Jae-Jung Suh of Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies: "while the U.S. military adds to the South's capability, some of its contribution may be superfluous, especially given that Seoul is already enjoying military advantages over Pyongyang. The alliance's supplementary effect, therefore, [is] smaller than it seems at first."<sup>25</sup>

The South requires well-trained and equipped armed forces that are better than those of the DPRK, and Seoul has those already. For the ROK to further upgrade its forces would take money and time, but presumably the South Korean people believe protecting their nation is worth substantial and sustained effort. If not, the American people are not responsible for filling any resulting gap. U.S. fiscal obligations start with a national debt exceeding \$13 trillion and an annual deficit running up to almost \$1.6 trillion.<sup>26</sup> Americans are borrowing money to pay to defend the South so South Koreans can spend their money on other priorities.

But South Koreans have long been capable of doing far more on their own behalf. Despite a growing economy, the military dictatorship of Chun Doo-hwan cut military outlays in the 1980s for economic reasons. Defense spending continued falling as a share of GDP under democratically elected Presidents Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung. Although the leftish Roh Moo-hyun government reversed this trend, conservative President Lee Myung-bak has dialed back the recent modest growth in spending. Chung-in Moon and Sangkeun Lee, both professors at Yonsei University explain:

Although the actual amount of defense spending rose slightly as part of a fiscal stimulus package to cope with the global financial crisis, the relative share of total government spending was radically reduced to 10.8 percent in 2009. The Lee government has

also announced plans to cut the estimated budget for the Defense Reform 2020.<sup>27</sup>

## **Refashioning an Outdated Alliance**

The alliance is outdated, but in the short-term the United States and South Korea are tied together militarily. Their responses to the sinking of the *Cheonan* have reflected that relationship, thus Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's vague promise of "consequences" for North Korea in response to the *Cheonan* sinking.

However, Washington should leave imposition of those consequences to Seoul. There are low-risk steps which the Obama administration could take, but almost all would be counterproductive.

For instance, naming the North a terrorist state for sinking the *Cheonan* would demonstrate that the designation has little or nothing to do with terrorism.<sup>28</sup> Sinking a military vessel may be an act of war, but it does not fit the definition of terrorism.

Formally killing the Six-Party Talks might provide the ROK and the United States some satisfaction but it also would eliminate the only ongoing U.S.-North Korean dialogue and might make it harder to enlist China's assistance in dealing with the North.<sup>29</sup> In fact, after the sinking the Obama administration supported restarting these negotiations. State Department spokesman Philip Crowley explained: "I wouldn't necessarily link those directly. And we want to see North Korea come back to the six-party process."<sup>30</sup> However, the administration has not pushed the issue since the North's complicity became obvious.

Finally, reinforcing America's military posture on the peninsula represents a move in the wrong direction. Victor Cha of Georgetown University, who was the NSC director for Asian Affairs in the latter years of the Bush administration, advocates "reestablishing deterrence on the peninsula."<sup>31</sup> Exactly when and how deterrence disappeared he does not

detail, but responsibility for any “reestablishment” should lie with Seoul.

Similarly, Bruce Klingner of the Heritage Foundation advocates enhancing U.S. naval forces in the Yellow Sea.<sup>32</sup> However, South Korea already possesses larger, better-equipped, and more modern vessels than does the North. The sinking of the *Cheonan* should serve as a wake-up call to Seoul to focus its military build-up on its own defense rather than regional or global missions.<sup>33</sup>

Cha proposes delaying the planned 2012 transfer of operational control (OPCON) over the combined U.S. and South Korean forces in any war to the ROK. Ralph Cossa of Pacific Forum CSIS similarly argues against dissolving the Combined Forces Command in favor of the South Korean military so that “there should be no question left in Pyongyang’s mind about the joint ROK-U.S. commitment to fight together.”<sup>34</sup> A number of South Koreans also want to postpone this move.

However, the very modest step is long overdue. Gen. Walter Sharp, commander of U.S. Forces Korea and head of the CFC, notes the limited nature of the change: “This is not the ROK military becoming responsible for the self-reliant forces [sic] to defend the Republic of Korea.”<sup>35</sup> It is simply taking over command of combined forces, most of which would be South Korean, from the United States. The ROK and U.S. militaries have worked together for more than 30 years as part of the CFC. Nicksch writes: “It is difficult to believe that the South Korean command has not achieved a high level of preparedness.”<sup>36</sup>

Yet the proposed reform is a tepid measure that just marginally reduces South Korea’s dependent mentality. It also creates the awkward and troubling outcome of putting American troops under foreign military command. A better means to increase deterrence would be for Seoul to increase its own defense expenditures and readiness. Affirming its willingness to act independent of the United States would be a good start.

Both sides should use the *Cheonan* controversy to reconsider an alliance that has outlived its original justification. Once the cur-

rent crisis passes, the Mutual Defense Treaty should be terminated and the U.S. forces should be withdrawn.<sup>37</sup> There is much on which both nations should work together in the future, including military operations where both countries have interests at stake. But such cooperation does not require today’s antiquated security relationship.

## Conclusion

The U.S.-ROK military alliance has lost its purpose. South Korea is not critical to America’s defense and America’s assistance is not—or at least should not be—critical to South Korea’s defense. Far from improving regional security, the current relationship makes it harder for both nations to act to protect their own vital interests. Especially after the financial crash of 2008, Washington should make policy to promote America’s, not the ROK’s, continued economic development.

Doing so would not end the strong relationship between the peoples of the United States and the ROK. Rather, eliminating the alliance would offer a new beginning. The relationship would continue, but now it would be centered on family, trade, culture, and other nonmilitary ties. Security cooperation could continue where warranted, but with America and South Korea as equals. After 65 years of dependence on the United States, the South Korean people should take over responsibility for their own defense.

## Notes

1. Ted Galen Carpenter and Doug Bandow, *The Korean Conundrum: America’s Troubled Relations with North and South Korea* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2004), pp. 102–110.
2. Doug Bandow, *Tripwire: Korea and U.S. Foreign Policy in a Changed World* (Washington: Cato Institute, 1996), pp. 71–73.
3. *Defense White Paper: 2008* (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, 2008), p. 45.
4. Some skeptics have suggested alternative explanations for the sinking, but the evidence of North

**The U.S. and ROK should use the *Cheonan* controversy to reconsider an alliance that has outlived its original justification.**

- Korean responsibility appears convincing. See, e.g., “*Cheonan* Findings Raise More Questions,” *The Chosun Ilbo*, May 26, 2010, [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2010/05/24/2010052401483.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2010/05/24/2010052401483.html). Moreover, the South Korean government was reluctant to blame Pyongyang for a time, leading to charges of a cover-up in order to avoid a confrontation with the North.
5. Evan Ramstad, “Korea Crisis Has Roots in Border Row,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 2, 2010.
  6. Mark Hosenball, “U.S. Intel Official: North Korea Is Bluffing,” *Newsweek* blog, May 26, 2010, <http://www.newsweek.com/blogs/declassified/2010/05/26/u-s-intelligence-sees-scant-evidence-that-north-korea-is-preparing-for-war.html>.
  7. Elected in 2007, President Lee ended the so-called “Sunshine Policy” of engaging Pyongyang largely irrespective of its policies towards the South. The North Koreans responded angrily, and have frequently used the Yellow Sea to raise regional tensions. Narushige Michishita, “The *Cheonan* Sinking and Kim Jong Il’s China Visit: Now What?” East Asia Forum, May 12, 2010, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2010/05/12/the-cheonan-sinking-and-kim-jong-ils-china-visit-now-what/>; Scott A. Snyder, “Inter-Korean West Sea Tensions,” Council on Foreign Relations “First Take,” March 27, 2010, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/21754/interkorean\\_west\\_sea\\_tensions.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/21754/interkorean_west_sea_tensions.html).
  8. Authorities in Seoul are investigating whether a North Korean general lost a star after the naval confrontation last fall, and was rewarded with a restoration of rank after the *Cheonan*’s sinking. “Korea: North Korean General ‘Rewarded’ for Sinking *Cheonan*,” Spero News, April 27, 2010, <http://www.speroforum.com/a/31724/Korea-North-Korean-general-rewarded-for-sinking-Cheonan>.
  9. See, e.g., B. R. Myers, “South Korea’s Collective Shrug,” *International Herald Tribune*, May 29–30, 2010.
  10. “72 Pct. Say NK Caused *Cheonan* Sinking,” *The Dong-A Ilbo*, May 22, 2010. In fact, in local elections voters appeared to punish the ruling party for being too confrontational. Blaine Harden, “South Korean Voters Opt for ‘Reason over Confrontation,’ with the North,” *Washington Post*, June 5, 2010.
  11. See, e.g., Blaine Harden, “Resistance against N. Korean Regime Taking Root, Survey Suggests,” *Washington Post*, March 24, 2010; Thomas P. M. Barnett, “The New Rules: As Kim Fades, China Cashes Out in North Korea,” *World Politics Review*, April 26, 2010, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/5459/the-new-rules-as-kim-fades-china-cashes-out-in-north-korea>.
  12. Quoted in Jae-Jung Suh, “Allied to Race? The U.S.-Korea Alliance and Arms Race,” *Asian Perspective* 33, no. 4 (2009): 122–23.
  13. Quoted in Hwang Doo-hyong, “U.S. Committed to 6-Way Talks Resumption Despite N. Korea’s Suspected Role in Ship Sinking: State Dept.,” Yonhap News Agency, April 28, 2010, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2010/04/29/26/0301000000AEN20100429000200315F.HTML>.
  14. Carpenter and Bandow, pp. 96–98; Doug Bandow, “Wrong War, Wrong Place, Wrong Time: Why Military Action Should Not Be Used to Resolve the North Korean Nuclear Crisis,” Cato Institute Foreign Policy Briefing no. 76, May 12, 2003, p. 8.
  15. See, e.g., Carpenter and Bandow, pp. 71–100; and Doug Bandow, “All the Players at the Table: A Multilateral Solution to the North Korean Nuclear Crisis,” June 26 2003, Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 478.
  16. Quoted in Mike Mount, “No Alert for U.S. Troops in Korea, Pentagon Says,” CNN, May 21, 2010, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/05/20/korea.sunken.ship.us/index.html>.
  17. There are several nightmare scenarios which could lead to conflict. See, e.g., David E. Sanger, “In the Koreas, Five Possible Ways to War,” *New York Times*, May 28, 2010.
  18. Victor Cha, “North Korean Leader Kim Jong-il’s Visit to China,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 4, 2010, <http://csis.org/publication/north-korean-leader-kim-jong-il%E2%80%99s-visit-china>.
  19. Larry A. Niksch, “The Opcon Military Command Issue Amidst a Changing Security Environment on the Korean Peninsula,” Paper presented at the KORUS Forum at the Embassy of Korea, March 24, 2010, p. 2.
  20. See, e.g., Chung-in Moon and Sangkeun Lee, “Military Spending and the Arms Race on the Korean Peninsula,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, March 28, 2010, [http://www.japanfocus.org/-Chung\\_in-Moon/3333](http://www.japanfocus.org/-Chung_in-Moon/3333); Carpenter and Bandow, pp. 113–15.
  21. Niksch, p. 2.
  22. For a more extensive discussion, see Carpenter and Bandow, pp. 111–19.
  23. See, e.g., Bradley K. Martin, “North Korea: The Drumbeats of War,” April 28, 2010, *Global Post*, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/south-korea/100427/north-korea-threat-north-korea-nuclear>.



24. Quoted in Suh, p. 115.
25. Suh, p. 117.
26. Matt Cover, "Annual Federal Deficit Will Hit \$1 Trillion This Month—with 3 Plus Months to Go in Fiscal Year," CNS News Online, June 7, 2010, <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/67238>.
27. Moon and Lee.
28. Jae Ku, director of U.S.-Korea Institute at the School of Advanced International Studies, points out that the North Koreans "took down a military vessel of a declared enemy which is still technically at war with them." Quoted in Ashish Kumar Sen, "North Korea May Return to Terrorism Sponsor List," *Washington Times*, May 21, 2010.
29. Negotiations can have a positive effect, even with Pyongyang. Joel Wit, a visiting scholar at the U.S.-Korea Institute, points out that the 1994 Agreed Framework constrained potential North Korean bomb-making. See, e.g., Eli Clifton, "Pressure Mounts on N. Korea over Warship Attack," *New York Times*, May 18, 2010. However, given the North's recent behavior—committing a blatant act of war—there is better reason than usual to be skeptical about the likelihood of the negotiations leading to an enforceable, sustainable agreement. Still, Leon V. Sigal of the Social Science Research Council reasonably urges putting this assumption to the test. Leon V. Sigal, "Magical Thinking on North Korea," *Boston Globe*, February 24, 2010. In any case, only strong Chinese support offers much hope of getting a positive response, and that likely would require an allied willingness to pursue talks with the North. See, e.g., Doug Bandow, "Taming Pyongyang," National Interest Online, May 3, 2010, <http://www.nationalinterest.org/Article.aspx?id=23336>.
30. Quoted in Hwang Doo-hyong.
31. Victor Cha, "America Must Show Resolve over North Korea," *Financial Times*, May 21, 2010, p. 9.
32. Bruce Klingner, "U.S. Must Respond Firmly to North Korean Naval Attack," The Heritage Foundation, Backgrounder 2414, May 20, 2010, p. 1.
33. The Lee government established an independent commission to review South Korean defense policy after the *Cheonan* sinking, including the relative priority of operations on and off the peninsula. Scott A. Snyder, "The *Cheonan* Investigation: Interim Results and South Korean Policy Options," Council on Foreign Relations blog, May 18, 2010, <http://blogs.cfr.org/asia/2010/05/18/the-cheonan-investigation-interim-results-and-south-korean-policy-options/>.
34. Ralph A. Cossa, "The Korea's *Cheonan* Incident: Choosing an Appropriate Response," East Asia Forum, May 11, 2010, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2010/05/11/the-koreas-cheonan-incident-choosing-an-appropriate-response/>. See also Daniel A. Pinkston, "Opinion: How to Approach North Korea," *Global Post*, May 12, 2010, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/worldview/100510/south-korea-and-north-korea-nuclear-attack-missile-pyongyang>.
35. Quoted in Ashley Rowland and Hwang Haerym, "Will South Korea Be Ready to Assume Wartime Command?" *Stars and Stripes*, April 19, 2010, <http://www.stripes.com/news/will-south-korea-be-ready-to-assume-wartime-command-1.101057>.
36. Niksch, p. 1.
37. For a more detailed review, see Doug Bandow, "Bring the Troops Home: Ending the Obsolete Korean Commitment," Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 474, May 7, 2003.

## OTHER STUDIES IN THE FOREIGN POLICY BRIEFING PAPER SERIES

89. **Rethinking Darfur** by Marc Gustafson (June 1, 2010)
88. **Foreign Aid and the Weakening of Democratic Accountability in Uganda** by Andrew Mwenda (July 12, 2006)
87. **Mexico Is Becoming the Next Colombia** by Ted Galen Carpenter (November 15, 2005)
86. **Time to Stop Fooling Ourselves about Foreign Aid: A Practitioner's View** by Thomas Dichter (September 12, 2005)
85. **Underdevelopment in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Role of the Private Sector and Political Elites** by Moeletsi Mbeki (April 15, 2005)
84. **How the Drug War in Afghanistan Undermines America's War on Terror** by Ted Galen Carpenter (November 10, 2004)
83. **The Dominican Republic: Resolving the Banking Crisis and Restoring Growth** by Steve H. Hanke (July 20, 2004)
82. **President Bush's Muddled Policy on Taiwan** by Ted Galen Carpenter (March 15, 2004)
81. **At a Crossroads in Afghanistan: Should the United States Be Engaged in Nation Building?** by Subodh Atal (September 24, 2003)
80. **Monetary Options for Postwar Iraq** by Steve H. Hanke and Matt Sekerke (September 22, 2003)
79. **The New Approach to Foreign Aid: Is the Enthusiasm Warranted?** by Ian Vásquez (September 17, 2003)
78. **Reauthorize or Retire the Overseas Private Investment Corporation?** by Ian Vásquez and John Welborn (September 15, 2003)
77. **Missile Defense: Defending America or Building Empire?** by Charles V. Peña (May 28, 2003)
76. **Wrong War, Wrong Place, Wrong Time: Why Military Action Should Not Be Used to Resolve the North Korean Nuclear Crisis** by Doug Bandow (May 12, 2003)

75. **The IMF's Dubious Proposal for a Universal Bankruptcy Law for Sovereign Debtors** by Anna J. Schwartz (March 12, 2003)
74. **The China-Taiwan Military Balance: Implications for the United States** by Ivan Eland (February 5, 2003)
73. **Options for Dealing with North Korea** by Ted Galen Carpenter (January 9, 2003)
72. **V-22: Osprey or Albatross?** by Charles V. Peña (January 8, 2003)
71. **Unsavory Bedfellows: Washington's International Partners in the War on Drugs** by Ted Galen Carpenter (August 1, 2002)
70. **The New Homeland Security Apparatus: Impeding the Fight against Agile Terrorists** by Eric R. Taylor (June 26, 2002)
69. **Robust Response to 9/11 Is Needed but Poking the Hornets' Nest Is Ill-Advised** by Ivan Eland (December 18, 2001)
68. **The Anti-Terrorism Coalition: Don't Pay an Excessive Price** by Charles V. Peña (December 11, 2001)
67. **Argentine Endgame: Couple Dollarization with Free Banking** by Steve H. Hanke (December 4, 2001)
66. **Going Too Far: Bush's Pledge to Defend Taiwan** by Ted Galen Carpenter (May 30, 2001)
65. **The Rogue State Doctrine and National Missile Defense** by Ivan Eland and Daniel Lee (March 29, 2001)
64. **Instability in the Philippines: A Case Study for U.S. Disengagement** by Doug Bandow (March 21, 2001)
63. **The Great Game, Round 2: Washington's Misguided Support for the Baku-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline** by Stanley Kober (October 31, 2000)
62. **A Hollow Debate on Military Readiness** by Ivan Eland (October 17, 2000)
61. **Constitutional Problems with Enforcing the Biological Weapons Convention** by Ronald D. Rotunda (September 28, 2000)
60. **From the Sea: National Missile Defense Is Neither Cheap Nor Easy** by Charles V. Peña (September 6, 2000)

59. **Korean Détente: A Threat to Washington's Anachronistic Military Presence?** by Doug Bandow (August 17, 2000)
58. **Let's Make National Missile Defense Truly "National"** by Ivan Eland (June 27, 2000)
57. **"Isolationism" as the Denial of Intervention: What Foreign Policy Is and Isn't** by Earl C. Ravenal (April 27, 2000)
56. **The Greening of the World Bank: A Lesson in Bureaucratic Survival** by James M. Sheehan (April 12, 2000)
55. **East Timor and the "Slippery Slope" Problem** by Leon T. Hadar (December 20, 1999)
54. **Repairing the Lender-Borrower Relationship in International Finance** by Ian Vásquez (September 27, 1999)
53. *Special Operations Military Training Abroad and Its Dangers* by John Rudy and Ivan Eland (June 22, 1999)
52. *A Dollarization Blueprint for Argentina* by Steve H. Hanke and Kurt Schuler (March 12, 1999)
51. **Ballistic Missile Proliferation: Does the Clinton Administration Understand the Threat?** by Timothy M. Beard and Ivan Eland (February 11, 1999)
50. *Does U.S. Intervention Overseas Breed Terrorism? The Historical Record* by Ivan Eland (December 17, 1998)
49. *The Case for a Russian Currency Board System* by Steve H. Hanke (October 14, 1998)
48. **Time to Terminate the ESF and the IMF** by Anna J. Schwartz (August 26, 1998)
47. **Subtract Unneeded Nuclear Attack Submarines from the Fleet** by Ivan Eland (April 2, 1998)
46. **NATO Expansion Flashpoint No. 3: Kaliningrad** by Stanley Kober (February 11, 1998)
45. **NATO Expansion Flashpoint No. 2: The Border between Hungary and Serbia** by Ted Galen Carpenter and Pavel Kislitsyn (November 24, 1997)

Published by the Cato Institute, Cato Briefing Papers is a regular series evaluating government policies and offering proposals for reform. Nothing in Cato Briefing Papers should be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of the Cato Institute or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.



Contact the Cato Institute for reprint permission. Additional copies of Cato Briefing Papers are \$2.00 each (\$1.00 in bulk). To order, or for a complete listing of available studies, write the Cato Institute, 1000 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. (202) 842-0200 FAX (202) 842-3490.