

**A PATH TO REDUCTIONS  
OF CONVENTIONAL FORCES ON THE  
KOREAN PENINSULA**

**BY**

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From

**KOREA versus KOREA**

Das konventionelle militärische Kräfteverhältnis und der Weg zur Abrüstung

The Conventional Military Balance and the Path to Disarmament

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## **Zusammenfassung**

Die Koreanische Halbinsel ist eine der am höchsten militarisierten Regionen der Welt. Nach dem Krieg gab es sechs Dekaden bewaffneter Konfrontation zwischen dem Norden und dem Süden. Sich hartnäckig haltende Wahrnehmungen von Doktrin und Absichten der jeweils anderen Seite als offensiv haben zur Planung großangelegter (präemptiver) Operationen über die Grenze hinweg geführt.

Umfang und militärische Strukturen beider Seiten stehen im Widerspruch zu der Absicht, ein „stabiles Friedensregime“ zu etablieren, wie auf dem Gipfel von Singapore 2018 erklärt. Kriegserinnerung, die Trägheit militärischer Institutionen und die konventionellen Streitkräften eigene Komplexität bewirken, dass Strukturwandel und Reduzierung solcher Kräfte Jahre dauern wird.

Dieser Teil unserer Studie vermittelt Theorie und praktische Methoden, die Strukturwandel und Abrüstung im Sinne der Vertrauensbildung ermöglichen. Plädiert wird für eine Kombination von wechselseitig unilateralen und bilateral verhandelten Maßnahmen unter Beteiligung unterschiedlichster Akteure: unabhängigen Experten, Regierungsvertretern und Militärs.

Verschiedenste kleine Schritte, die ein wachsendes Interesse an den Minimalia einer gemeinsamen Zukunft für Korea anzeigen, sind der Schlüssel zu diesem Prozess. Fortschreitende Reduzierungen von über die Grenze hinweg zielenden Droh-Elementen durch einen beidseitigen, vertrauensbildenden Strukturwandel können zu einem sich selbst verstärkenden Prozess führen. Es mag ein oder zwei Dekaden dauern, bis sich dieses Wechselspiel auszahlt, aber es besteht die Perspektive, dass die Bemühungen in Richtung strukturell gewandelter und verkleinerter Militärpotentiale die Grundlage für ein neues, friedlicheres Verhältnis auf der Halbinsel bilden.

## Abstract

The Korean Peninsula is one of the most intensely militarized regions of the world. Following the Korean War, there have been more than six decades of a highly armed stand-off between South and North Korea. Persistent perceptions of the other's offensive doctrines and intentions have led to planning for large-scale cross-border operational (counter-) offensives.

The size and type of military structures in South and North Korea now stand in contradiction to the intent of "establishing a firm peace regime," as declared at the Singapore Summit of June 2018. The memory of war, the institutional reluctance of large military establishments to downsize, and the inherent complexity of conventional forces mean that a substantial restructuring and downsizing of forces will take years.

This section offers both theory and practical methods of implementing confidence-building military restructuring and downsizing. It advocates a combination of reciprocal unilateral and bilaterally-negotiated steps, involving the multilayered agency of non-governmental specialists, civilian officials, and military professionals.

Varied incremental steps that embody and signal the accumulating commitment to a minimally acceptable common political future for Korea are key to this process. Progressive reduction of cross-border invasion threats through mutual confidence-building force restructuring will constitute a *virtuous circle* of reinforcement for a changed relationship. It may take a decade or two of accumulation of the sunk costs of iterative reciprocity, but eventually, North and South Korea will arrive at a point where the demonstrated commitment to smaller restructured military postures is sufficient to allow rapid progress toward a stable level and disposition of arms compatible with a new peaceful political relationship.

## Introduction

The April 2018 Panmunjom Summit meeting of President Moon of the Republic of Korea and Chairman Kim of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea concluded with a joint Declaration committing North and South Korea to "... establishing a firm peace regime on the Korean peninsula" and an agreement "to carry out disarmament in a phased manner, as military tension is alleviated, and substantial progress is made in military confidence building (1)."

In the months following the summit, there were multiple working meetings of North and South Korean military officers to discuss confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs). North and South also took initial steps toward demilitarizing the DMZ, created a border-area no-fly zone, and sought to defuse long-standing disputes along the northern limit line of the West Sea. These steps were later elaborated in a military agreement signed in Pyongyang in September of 2018 (2).

The Summit had the immediate effect of foreclosing in the near term the "military option," as threatened by the highest officials of the United States (3), to disarm North Korea of its nuclear arsenal. As I wrote at the time:

"Section 3.4 of the Declaration states: '... measures being initiated by North Korea are very meaningful and crucial for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and [South and North] agreed to carry out their respective roles and responsibilities in this regard.'

"There is little doubt that the 'measures' referred to in Section 3.4 are the present 'freeze' in the testing of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. As long as the freeze holds,

embedded as it now is in the declared bilateral peace process in Korea, it will be very difficult for advocates of preventive war in the U.S. to craft a winning argument. This ‘option’ is, at least for now, foreclosed. The Declaration, in effect, puts Washington on notice before the world that South Korea will not go along with a unilateral war against the North (4).”

Instead of war, there were diplomatic meetings between Washington and Pyongyang intent on making arrangements for another summit, this one between President Trump and Chairman Kim. The Singapore Summit June of 2018 produced an optimistic joint statement (substantially re-prising the Panmunjom Declaration) in which the US and the DPRK committed to: “join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.” The DPRK, reaffirming the April Panmunjom Declaration, also committed “to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula (5).”

Subsequent negotiations and summits have not as yet achieved the big goals of the Singapore statement or small steps such as arranging the closing of North Korea’s Yongbyon nuclear facility or making official commitments to the reciprocal unilateral freezes of 2018 by the DPRK and the US-ROK. As diplomatic signaling events, the “freeze” gestures had made the summits possible in the first place. Nor have US-DPRK talks addressed restructuring and reduction in conventional forces. Nonetheless, reductions of conventional forces on the peninsula will be an essential aspect of achieving either or both lasting peace and denuclearization.

Recognizing that there is no way to predict the future of the diplomatic opening of 2018 (6), I turn my attention in this section to the

process of achieving a substantial drawdown of conventional military forces on the Korean Peninsula.

The Korean Peninsula is one of the most intensely militarized regions of the world. To a great extent, this is the legacy of the global Cold War in which the Korean War played a significant early role. Following that war, there have been more than six decades of a highly armed stand-off between South and North Korea. For many of those years, the militaries of both countries prepared for the eventuality of unifying the nation by force. Such strategic orientations, when combined with the perception of the other's offensive doctrines and intentions, led to planning for large-scale cross-border operational (counter-)offensives and to the building of the military structures and the acquisition of the armaments that would support such offensives. A discussion of today's conventional forces and the prospects for their reductions must acknowledge the enormous human cost of the Korean War from 1950-53. Researchers have estimated that between 1.5 and 4.5 million died – with at least half of this number being civilians (7). The collective memory of this slaughter remains strong and has contributed to the political attachment of North and South to large conventional forces.

Building trust and reassurance on both sides of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel is an essential part of any disarmament effort. It will not be easy and will take much more than gracious words from smiling leaders. The size and type of military structures developed during the extended period of the long cold war in Korea now stand in considerable tension with (and contradiction to) the declared intent of “establishing a firm peace regime.” Substantial military restructuring is appropriate to a pan-Korean goal of a new era of peace. The memory of war, the institutional reluctance of large military establishments to downsize, and the inherent complexity of

conventional forces mean that a substantial restructuring will take several decades.

In what follows, I integrate two significant contributions to the theory and practice of negotiating disarmament and international security stabilization. One is the work of Christopher Lawrence, as presented in *A Theory of Engagement with North Korea*. Lawrence rejects the “carrot and stick” approach to diplomacy and proposes a process of creating a shared “credible political future” relationship through progressive “physical changes on the ground that an uncommitted state would be unlikely to accept, and that are costly or difficult to reverse (8).”

The other contribution is the work of Lutz Unterseher and colleagues (of whom I am one) on an approach to [re-]structuring military forces which we call Confidence-Building Defense (C-BD) (9). In a 1996 paper on security prospects in post-apartheid southern Africa, we wrote: “... each nation's [military] posture (in its particulars) [must be] consistent with and conducive to progress toward greater interstate trust, which is a necessary condition for any far-reaching co-operation (10).”

This section offers both theory and practical methods of negotiating and implementing confidence-building military restructuring to minimize future military tensions on the peninsula. It advocates a combination of reciprocal unilateral and bilaterally-negotiated steps involving the multilayered agency of non-governmental specialists, civilian government officials, and military professionals. It discusses the importance of varied incremental steps that embody and signal the accumulating commitment to a shared vision of the future on the Korean peninsula that includes national security for both North and South Korea.

While I use illustrative examples of specific military restructuring and arms reductions, I do not recommend any particular steps to North or South Korea – only Koreans should develop and negotiate such steps as they consider appropriate for the benefit of Korea.

### **Complexities of Conventional Arms Reduction Talks**

Negotiation of conventional force reductions by two or more nations must address the numerous inherent asymmetries of national security circumstances. Because negotiators face very complex military-political issues, successful negotiations are rare.

For arms negotiators agreeing to limit weapons to equal numbers has often been an attractive goal. It gives any agreement an appearance of fairness, making it an easier sell in domestic politics. However, military leaders will likely oppose parity of conventional arms. Responding to their professional role of winning battles, they are resistant to the idea of fighting on an “even ‘playing’ field.” Instead, their goal is to dominate the battlefield and emerge from it with a minimum of their own losses.

The responsibility resides with national political leaders to make sure a smaller, transformed military is sufficient for national defense. This responsibility is quite demanding during a progressive drawdown of forces appropriate to the transition to a reliable peace. It requires careful analysis of current and likely future defense requirements to justify reductions and restructuring.



National goals can (and sometimes must) transcend the preference of military leaders to err on the side of maintaining large surpluses of forces. Once a country establishes very large armed forces, strong, committed, and persistent leadership is required to achieve conventional arms reductions.

### **Benefits of Confidence-Building Defense in Support of Arms Reductions**

National political leadership is not limited to arguing for military parity in negotiating military drawdowns with another nation. Confidence-Building Defense (C-BD) structures (11) make efficient use of several advantages of fighting on one's own prepared territory, allowing for stable asymmetry in the military postures of neighboring states. These include:

- Intimate knowledge of the home terrain allows for pre-engineering multiple combat positions in likely zones of combat, enabling practiced fields of fire from dispersed sites that cover and “thicken” the battlefield. This disposition of forces ensures the availability of far more strong points for the defense than an invading force will be able to establish in support of its offense.
  
- A confidence-building defense presents intruding forces with a complex network of diverse elements, making it difficult for them to adapt their tactics as the battle develops. The multiplicity of defense strong points provides essential support for friendly mobile

armored units during counterattacks, increasing the probability of achieving decisive interdiction of intruding forces.

- Combat units are designed to be efficient and effective in their primary roles and to be mutually supportive in the overall scheme, thus facilitating force allocation, command, and control.
- Lines of communication and supply are short, reliable, redundant, and hardened.
- In comparison to invading forces, troops fighting to protect their homeland have the advantage of a very considerable morale boost.

[The Appendix provides a detailed description of design principles and operational guidelines for a Confidence-Building Defense.]

The benefits that derive from confidence-building defense optimization provide a significant *operational margin of security*. This operational margin allows for self-limiting the military structural capacity for large-scale cross-border offensives. The opportunity to make structural changes becomes more pronounced when a former adversary begins to make their own confidence-building defense structural changes.

A confidence-building military posture signals reassurance to neighboring states that military investments are intended for defense sufficiency rather than domination of regional relations. Progressive reduction of cross-border invasion threats through mutual confidence-building force restructuring will constitute a *virtuous circle* of reinforcement for the shared political objectives of a new military and peace program.

No pair of states face the same geostrategic situation. Therefore, they should expect an asymmetrical endpoint of a negotiated drawdown. In the case of Korea, there will need to be ongoing analysis and discussion between North and South about their different defense requirements. For instance, in a future of robust peace on the peninsula, North Korea which has a 1416 km border with China, a 238 km border with South Korea, a 18 km border with Russia, and a coastline of 2,495 km may need relatively more land forces than South Korea which has a similar 2,413 km coastline but only the one 238 km land border with North Korea. South Korea might, therefore, choose to put relatively more emphasis on maritime forces.

An appropriate and sufficient military posture is one that is economically efficient and affordable within a nation's resource and demographic constraints. Such a military sector offers the nation the opportunity to employ resources for other economic and social priorities. As North and South Korea draw down their armed forces to the levels suitable to the new shared political goal of a peaceful peninsula, they can expect to free up more resources to employ toward their social and economic development aspirations (12).

## **Importance of Strong Leadership to a Concerted Peace Process**

When the political leadership and military force of a neighboring state appear to be aggressively offense-oriented, a nation so threatened will often find it compelling to choose a costly and risky offensive strategy to counter that threat. Adoption of an offensive strategy has dynamic effects on the two states, increasing their security dilemmas and their perceptions of mutual hostility. This dynamic, in turn, has sharply negative consequences for international politics, as has frequently been the case in Korea.

If, however, two formerly hostile states reach a point at which they decide to build a lasting peaceful relationship, we will expect an aspirational commitment to that future from the respective national leadership. Such commitments have been made on several occasions in the last 30 years by North and South Korea, most recently in the Panmunjom Declaration of 2018.

No eloquent language of intent is sufficient in itself to carry a disarmament project much beyond its initial conference. Rational and responsible leadership on both sides of a conflicted relationship will bring a great deal of caution to their assessment of the value of such an “aspirational commitment.” After all, the two Koreas have been in a conflictual relationship for a very long time, have had a few episodes of improving relations only to have hopes of peace dashed, and have armed themselves in preparation for possible, and at times expected war. If the change expressed in the new aspirational commitment is to justify large scale disarmament, it must be made real by many deeds carried out with consistency over time.

As Christopher Lawrence has argued, a complex project undertaken by former antagonists who have good reasons for distrust and harbor deep suspicions requires finding *a minimally acceptable common political future* to which both can provisionally accommodate themselves and eventually fully commit themselves (13).

In the case of Korea, specifying such a political future remains to be done. A final resolution of the long-standing national goal of reunification need not be the frame of a conventional forces disarmament process. An interim goal will be sufficient to support the process.

That interim vision will likely involve the notion of one nation, two systems. North and South will have to negotiate the substance of “one nation”, short of reunification. Whatever form it takes, this interim political future will most likely include some institutional inventions akin to those found in a confederation of states. Among those institutions might be jointly-staffed disarmament, armed forces restructuring, and monitoring/verification agencies.

Developing the vision of a shared political future will require holding multiple North-South (off-the-record, not-for-attribution) meetings of government officials and non-governmental political/economic/military specialists (academic and other.) A principal purpose of these meetings is to develop familiarity and trust among participants. The trust-building process will take years (14), and for that reason, the discussions and negotiations of a shared political vision must begin before and run concurrently with the disarmament and restructuring process.

## **The Conventional Forces Restructuring and Reductions Process**

Once national leaders have agreed to the shared goal of armed forces reductions and restructuring, the process proposed in this section systematically employs both reciprocal unilateral (15) and bilaterally-negotiated steps. These begin cautiously with low cost and low-risk steps. As trust in the commitment to the common political goal builds and the steps taken yield security benefits, the process advances to bigger, riskier, and more expensive steps.

It may take a decade or more of iterative reciprocity, but eventually North and South Korea will arrive at a point where the demonstrated commitment to the smaller restructured military postures is sufficient to allow rapid progress toward a stable level and disposition of arms compatible with the new political relationship (16). North and South Korea have already taken reciprocal unilateral steps in the “double freeze” – originally suggested by Russia and China. At the end of 2017, North Korea suspended testing of its nuclear weapons and its long-range missiles. Then in 2018, South Korea persuaded the U.S. to join it in canceling planned large-scale joint military exercises. These steps had the effect of opening a period of *détente*, making the subsequent direct negotiations and summits politically acceptable to the respective domestic audiences in Pyongyang and Washington.

The iterative reciprocal unilateralism I propose differs from “the freeze” in scope and time. It will involve many rounds of reciprocal steps.

## **The Process: Illustration and Discussion**

The process in Korea will first require a period of separate North and South Korean discussions and seminars (non-public, off-the-record) held at the governmental level and, as a creative idea-feeder to the governments, on the civilian university/institute level (17). The purpose of these meetings and related studies by experts will be to create a menu of restructuring and reduction options for selective employment by each government.

After the first draft of a menu is adopted, and assuming there has been real progress on the shared political future track, one government will decide to implement a low-cost, low-risk force restructuring/reduction move. As an illustrative example, South Korea, recognizing the North's perception of threat from the South's superior fighter/attack aircraft, might make the gesture of moving a squadron or two of fighter/attack aircraft from active to reserve status.

The success of this sort of arms diplomacy depends on keeping the iterated reciprocity going. Therefore it is in the mutual interest of the parties to refrain from embarrassing or insulting their counterparts or otherwise giving the other party any reason to suspend the process. Once the reciprocity stops, it is difficult to restart. The preference is for positive public pronouncements whenever possible.

When South Korea announces its move, the North should refrain from going public with any doubts it may have about the security value of the move. Such doubts or concerns can later be discussed or noted in the privacy of diplomatic communication with the South (18).

After the South has made a unilateral change in its force deployment, it is time for North Korea to reciprocate. In the best practice of this diplomatic approach, North Korea will make two gestures: one signifying reciprocation and the second taking up the initiative for leading the next reciprocal exchange. In effect, the North's second step solicits the second step by the South. Then the South should be prepared to take its third step (which by turn solicits the third step by the North.)

Through this process, the North and South are exchanging a symbolic (and to some extent real) position of vulnerability by alternately taking a step that has not yet been reciprocated by the other. This symbolic exchange of modest vulnerabilities is an important aspect of transitioning the relationship from a position of hostility to one of peace and accord.

The design of confidence-building defense reduces vulnerabilities by way of its robust and efficient structures. Transitioning to a C-BD military structure while drawing down conventional forces will in itself constitute a step in the process of conventional arms reductions, especially if both parties acknowledge to each other the value of such changes. Moving toward adoption of confidence-building defense force structures will allow states to make deeper reductions at a more rapid pace than would be the case if they tried to draw down conventional forces while remaining committed to (counter-) offensive doctrines.

Reciprocating steps in this process do not need to be in kind. There are menus of many possibilities (19) from which to choose. North and South can look through their menus for items that have roughly similar levels of military threat reduction, cost, and risk. For instance, as an illustrative non-like opening reciprocating gesture, North Korea might



pull back a portion of its artillery presently massed near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel to positions 50-75 km removed.

As soon as North and South make their first iteration of reciprocal moves, it will be important that direct talks, if not already in progress, ensue between officials, including military experts, of both North and South. These talks will exchange frank and respectful assessments of what has just transpired. Routine discussions throughout the process will help inform each side as to what further steps will likely yield productive responses.

Steps must follow on each other, calibrated to the degree of trust earned in the process to date and to the degree of political and security risk judged tolerable by the parties relative to the developing relations with the other. The trajectory of the reciprocal exchanges is generally in the direction from lower to higher costs and from very little to greater security risk. All of the steps can not be envisioned before the process unfolds. It will be a dynamic process, responding to the participants' experience over time, the actions and reactions of many independent agents, and numerous other exogenous factors.

As Lawrence argues, the accumulation of sunk costs by the parties is key to building commitment to a shared goal. He writes, "...sunk costs speak of the future-oriented commitments by virtue of their time-irreversibility (20)."

After the exchange of a few dozen reciprocal moves, the parties will have advanced their relationship far enough to find a compelling reason to have bilateral negotiations on a package of steps. Among other things,

such a bilateral agreement can address issues and items that remained outside the particulars of unilateral steps already taken.

Unilateral steps, by themselves, are rarely self-verifying. Often it is not fully evident what the initiating party has done. Therefore as the process proceeds through many reciprocity cycles, it will be important that bilateral negotiations address the fraught subject of verification and, in particular, intrusive inspections.

In the early years of this drawdown process, when trust between parties remains low, we should expect little openness to intrusive inspections and other verification methods. The security risks will appear too great. Early unilateral steps are in themselves low-risk and the need for such inspections will not seem compelling. Later, as bigger, more risky steps are taken, the provision of official on-site inspections may appear essential (21).

The iterative reciprocal process continues, and in the eventuality of years of arms reductions, restructuring, and building political trust, North and South Korea can begin to have productive discussions focused on specifying their envisioned endpoint of the drawdown. Even though the size and complexity of conventional forces will mean that a mid-process vision will necessarily lack a high degree of specificity, such a sketch of a provisional endpoint will be useful in guiding subsequent steps. The accumulation over years of unilateral steps supplemented by bilaterally agreed upon reductions will converge on and substantiate an endpoint which becomes ever more focused and specific.

## Verifying, Hedging, and Cheating

An iterative many-step process of drawing down and restructuring conventional forces provides time and opportunity to interrogate at the diplomatic level and the military-technical level the faithful fulfillment of political declarations. To be able to sustain domestic political support for more than very modest steps toward conventional force reductions and to keep security risks at an acceptable level, we should expect the governments of both North and South will pay close attention to verification of force changes and discovery of instances of cheating.

In his working paper, *Normalization by other Means*, Lawrence argues that nations will hedge their security promises and commitments whether made verbally, in writing, or by unilateral signaling acts. They are likely to maintain “clandestine latent capability” as a “hedge against the possible failure of ... agreements (22).” He notes that not all hedging activity is by itself destructive of the diplomatic process. Nations that hedge may “feel empowered by the hedge to take further” and more risky steps toward the shared political goal than they might otherwise. In the early reciprocal exchanges, when trust is minimal, it is realistic to expect that a nation will attempt to offset perceived vulnerabilities created by their unilateral moves with military investments elsewhere. If this offsetting investment is in the direction of improving confidence-building defenses, it will be less likely to diminish the value of the unilateral step. Nonetheless, hedging and off-setting investments will sometimes slow down the overall process, limiting the scope of and discouraging the boldness of the moves of the other party.

Lawrence also asserts that “... all states will ‘cheat’ on a commitment if they perceive their security to be at stake (23).” This reality presents a problem for realizing the potential of mutual commitment to

conventional force reductions. This section proposes an approach to arms reduction diplomacy designed to reduce the destructive effects of cheating. Some of the ways this mitigation occurs:

- A process of many small steps over an extended period of time provides the opportunity to interrogate and assess the security effect of each move and to discover discrepancies between the presentation of a step taken and the reality as assessed by intelligence means. The low risk to security of each step taken in the process has the effect of containing the damage to the overall credibility of the arms reduction process when cheats to particular steps are suspected or discovered.
- Ongoing official conferencing provides the opportunity to address with diplomatic care any discrepancies and suspected cheats.
- Sunk costs and risks accumulate slowly over many years, providing the opportunity to calibrate changes in military postures so that effects accrue to each party more or less equally. This process makes any particular cheat of lesser consequence than would be the case if the changes were part of a comprehensive arms control agreement implemented at one point in time.
- To the extent that the parties adopt confidence-building defense postures, the robust defense efficiencies that accrue to a C-BD posture will significantly mitigate the effects of any cheating.

## **Conclusion**

Seventy years of conflict make it hard to sustain hope for a peaceful future for Korea. No one can predict when peace will come, but sooner or later, peace will have its turn.

The objective of this section is to explicate a theory and practice of diplomatic negotiation for smaller, less offensive, conventional armed forces – as one part of a future peaceful relationship between North and South Korea. There are many changes needed to support a peaceful future, and transformed conventional forces are among the most important.

At the beginning of negotiations for conventional force reductions, both sides will have many doubts about the intentions of the other side. The proposed process addresses the reality of distrust in Korea. By way of numerous sequential low-cost, low-risk armed forces restructuring and reduction steps, trust builds through the accumulation of sunk military investments in a shared future of smaller, less threatening armed forces on the Korean Peninsula.

If the participants in these negotiations do not have genuine intentions to draw down forces to levels and types appropriate to peaceful relations, they will not voluntarily choose to pay such costs.

Confidence-building defense structures signal that the relations between North and South are moving toward mutual defense sufficiency rather than postures of military dominance suitable for aggression. By

employing the principles of confidence-building defense to the restructuring of forces, the drawdown process can proceed more quickly and surely.

## Endnotes

1. Section 3.2 of the Panmunjom Declaration, 2018.
2. *The South Korea-North Korea military agreement of 2018-9-19.*
3. Famously, on August 8, 2017 U.S. President Trump had said, “North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States. They will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen.” Baker, Peter and Choe Sang-Hun, *Trump Threatens ‘Fire and Fury’ Against North Korea if It Endangers U.S.*  
On August 20, 2017 national security adviser Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster is quoted as saying: “Are we preparing plans for a preventive war? The president’s been very clear about it. He said he’s not going to tolerate North Korea being able to threaten the United States.” Sanger, David E., *Talk of ‘Preventive War’ Rises in White House Over North Korea.*  
Concerned about the possibility of war in Korea, President Moon of South Korea spoke in a televised press conference: “No matter what options the United States and President Trump want to use, they have promised to have full consultation with South Korea and get our consent in advance. This is a firm agreement between South Korea and the United States. The people can be assured that there will be no war.” Perlez, Jane and Choe Sang-Hun, *Bannon and Dunford Remarks Muddle U.S. Strategy for North Korea.*
4. Knight, *The Inter-Korean Summit Declaration: a review*
5. White House, *Joint Statement of President Trump and Chairman Kim at the Singapore Summit.* It remains unclear whether President Trump understood what the Koreans meant by the phrase “denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” From the history of the use this phrase in Korea it is clear that it encompasses not only North Korean nuclear weapons, but also all nuclear-capable weaponry that the U.S. deploys from time to time to the Korean peninsula, and even to the region. To

date both Washington and Pyongyang have been evasive in addressing this critical issue of defining the scope of denuclearization. Washington officials consistently speak as if the only subject of the talks is denuclearization of the North.

6. As of December 2019, negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea have produced no agreement on steps toward denuclearization, no substantive security guarantees, nor normalization of relations. The negotiations are effectively suspended. The approach-avoidance relationship between the U.S. and South Korea (as allies) and North Korea has been the norm for decades, and it is reasonable to expect that a time will come again, sooner or later, when there will be a rapprochement and another opportunity to pursue serious conventional force reductions negotiations.

It is quite possible that North and South Korea will decide to pursue conventional forces reductions without the initial participation of the United States as a negotiating partner. While acknowledging the complications of including the U.S. in negotiations, this section focuses on a model of bilateral North-South negotiation. Probably the most productive way to include the U.S. in the process will be for South Korea to negotiate and plan for a U.S. Forces Korea reduction and restructuring steps which complement South Korean steps. This would entail simultaneous bi-lateral negotiations: South Korea & the U.S. and South Korea & North Korea.

7. Lacina, *The PRIO Battle Deaths Dataset, 1946-2008*.

8. Lawrence, *A Theory of Engagement with North Korea*.

9. *Confidence-Building Defense (C-BD)* can include many types of *confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs)*, but is not the same as CSBMs. While CSBMs emphasize matters of communication and procedure, C-BD pays particular attention to the effects of military structures and doctrines on international confidence and stability. The institutionalization of CSBMs can normalize the exchange between states of doctrinal and defense planning information, thus aiding in the gestation of C-BD.

10. Conetta, et al, *Building Confidence into the Security of Southern Africa*.

11. Overall integration of C-BD components and application to ground, air, and maritime forces are included in Conetta, Carl and Lutz Unterseher, *Confidence-Building Defense: Fundamental Design Principles*, a selection of slides prepared for seminars held in Holland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Belarus in 1994.

The seminars were organized and co-sponsored by the Study Group on Alternative Security Policy (SAS) and the Project on Defense Alternatives (PDA).

<http://comw.org/pda/fulltext/Fundamental Principles of CBD.pdf>

12. It should not be assumed that a reduction in military structure will result in an equivalent percentage budget reduction. When the costs associated with changes to equipment, force structures, and communications are accounted for, the real world budgetary savings will be in the range of 40-60% of the nominal size of the structural change. In other words a notional reduction in size of 40% will result in budgetary savings of between 16 and 24%. Much depends on the particulars such as the amount of modernization that takes place in transition. Nonetheless, such savings potentials would represent a significant portion of annual military budgets for both North and South Korea and, if sustained as the new norm over decades, would accumulate very significant benefits for Korea, especially regarding the social/economic opportunity costs of maintaining large military establishments.

13. Section 2.2 “From Carrots and Sticks to Techno-Political Futures,” in Lawrence, *A Theory of Engagement with North Korea*.

14. Experience with East-West security conferences in the late Cold War suggests that only a fraction of the participants in such meetings will eventually gain enough trust and rapport with their counterparts from the other side of the conflict divide to begin working constructively toward the cooperative disarmament and peace goals of the meetings. However, these international collaborators can eventually influence government policy decisively, as some did in Moscow and Washington, and capitols between.

15. For the most part, this section places unilateral changes to military postures in the context of reciprocal steps. However, it should be noted that as the process of restructuring toward C-BD postures progresses there will be many opportunities for unilateral reductions and changes in force elements that can be made safely without immediate reciprocity. Even if a nation does not have a partner ready to reciprocate in a restructuring drawdown, it can benefit from the efficiencies and non-provocative aspects of C-BD.

16. In Europe, the thawing of the Cold War can be traced to the decision taken in 1972 by President Nixon and General Secretary Brezhnev to launch the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Vienna Mutual



Balanced Force Reductions in Europe (MBFR) negotiations. In 1975 the Helsinki Final Act was signed by 35 nations and included a number of important CSBMs including notification procedures for major military exercises.

Progress during the next ten years in conventional forces talks was slow, mostly limited to the exchange of proposals by NATO and WTO. Then in December of 1988 General Secretary Gorbachev, speaking at the U.N., announced the unilateral withdrawal of 50,000 Soviet troops from Central and Eastern Europe and the defensive restructuring of the force that would remain. After that, progress came quickly in the multilateral negotiations.

In January of 1989 the MBFR talks were superseded (following a joint NATO-WTO mandate) by the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations which expanded the geographical scope to cover the Atlantic to the Urals. Only a year and a half later the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) was signed. This treaty represented a major embodiment of the European Cold War's conclusion.

17. Participation of non-governmental national security experts and those at the lower and middle level of government agencies will be a particular challenge for North Korea where national security policy decisions are centralized at the highest level. Individuals expressing new ideas and formulations which have not been approved at the highest level of the government know they put their own safety at risk. If North Korea commits itself politically to the proposed process of conventional drawdown, it may become necessary for the North Korean leader to explicitly encourage the creation of “new ideas.”

For many decades in the Soviet Union creative exploration of national security options was discouraged by fear of retribution from above. During the Gorbachev years this changed and by the second half of the 1980s Soviet intellectuals and policy analysts were openly engaging in intellectual discussions with diverse Westerners around mutual security matters. Lutz Unterseher, in the memoir note entitled *Pleasant Lunches*, details how confidence-building defense study papers were transmitted, on the initiative of the Kremlin and with the consent of (then West-) German Inland Intelligence, to Moscow beginning in early 1987, nearly two years before Gorbachev's history-making announcement in December of 1988 of unilateral defensive restructuring and reductions of Soviet troops in Central and Eastern Europe.

18. For this illustration of an initial unilateral move, I have chosen one with relatively little cost or risk for the South's military posture and relatively little

security gain for the North. All parties will be well aware that South Korea can reactivate the air squadrons in a time of acute military tension. Its primary significance is as a political gesture of peaceful intent and expectation.

19. The size and complexity of conventional forces allows for each country to collect an extensive menu of restructuring and reduction options. Conditions will change over time, so each government's restructuring and reductions menu must be revisited and updated routinely. Attachment to a single "established" menu of options will result in sub-optimality. Revisions to the menu will have no direct effect on the diplomatic relationship, because each country's menu will be kept secret.

20. Lawrence, *Normalization by Other Means*, pp. 4-5. Lawrence argues (citing Fearon, *Signaling Foreign Policy Interests*) that "sunk costs" are among the best indicators of the degree of commitment to a stated arms control/reduction goal.

21. Harahan & Kun, *On-site Inspections under the CFE Treaty*.

22. Lawrence, *Normalization by Other Means*. pg. 22.

23. Ibid. pg. 17.

## APPENDIX

### **Principles of National Military Stability**

Adapted by Charles Knight (January 2019) from Conetta, et al., *Building Confidence into the Security of Southern Africa*, 1996.

*Military stabilization* is best achieved by an appropriate and affordable defense establishment and a sufficient, steadfast, and non-provocative defense posture. In addition, military structures must avoid contributing to the aggravation of existing or potential civil conflict.

An *appropriate* defense establishment is one that is suitable for the particular society it serves. Nations should be circumspect about the imitation of foreign military structures, rather building them in accord with the character of the nation and the skills of its people.

An *affordable* defense will achieve security within their existing resource and demographic constraints. In the effort to meet affordability criteria, nations that are confident of their defensive intent can exploit the structural and operational efficiencies of a defensive orientation. These "home court" advantages include the high morale of troops defending home territory, intimate knowledge of the terrain, shorter lines of supply and communication, and the opportunity to prepare the likely zones of combat intensively. The inherent efficiencies of a defensive orientation also make easier the reconciliation of the various confidence-building defense criteria: non-provocation, sufficiency, steadfastness, and affordability.

*Sufficiency* refers to how well a defense posture matches a threat matrix. The degree of "match" involves both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the threat(s). It is important to undertake a broad review of national objectives to provide a context for the measure of sufficiency. This process will help specify what is to be protected and set the level of defense or deterrence certainty that a nation can or wishes to attain. Once objectives are clear, it is possible (although by no means easy) to determine military "sufficiency."

In many cases, states will discover that they cannot hope to afford the highest degree of deterrence – which requires a transparent and assured capability to quickly and easily defeat any aggression. This is a common dilemma for many smaller states with large and very powerful neighbors. However, lesser objectives may be within reach and desirable – for instance, the capacity to very substantially raise the cost of any aggression and to buy time for supportive intervention from allies, and thereby achieve an effective degree of deterrence.

A *steadfast* posture combines the qualities of robustness and reliability. Although, in some sense, encompassed by the notion of sufficiency, "steadfastness" refers to intrinsic (that is, non-relational) aspects of a defense posture. "Integrity" and "cohesion" are approximate synonyms for steadfastness.

*Robustness* refers to the capacity of a defense array to absorb shock and suffer losses without undergoing catastrophic collapse. Instead, the defense maintains a cohesive combat capability. Even when facing an overwhelming level of threat, a robust defense force will degrade gracefully, buying time for re-grouping, diplomatic intervention, or outside assistance. As a general rule, a steadfast and robust military posture will

not exhibit an over-reliance on concentrated forces and base areas which provide lucrative targets for an enemy. Nor will it depend on a narrow set of technologies that an enemy could counter through a dedicated program of innovation.

*Reliability* is the second aspect of steadfastness, and it refers to the capacity of the military to perform as planned with high confidence across a wide variety of "environmental" circumstances. A reliable defense will avoid the security gamble of "high risk" operational plans or dependence on immature or poorly integrated technologies.

Reliability is also a function of social relations in the armed forces and the society and of the motivation and training of personnel. A reliable military is one that is motivated and ready to conscientiously serve the state in a role that is understood to be both important and limited.

A defense posture is regarded as *non-provocative* if it (i) embodies little or no capacity for large-scale or surprise cross-border attack, and (ii) provides few, if any, high-value and vulnerable targets for an aggressor's attack. These guidelines pertain most strongly to the problem of crisis instability – periods of rising political tension during which the fear of and opportunity for a preemptive attack may precipitate an otherwise avoidable military clash.

The non-provocation standard also addresses the larger issues of the security dilemma by generally seeking to reduce reliance on offensively-oriented military structures. In so doing, it seeks to minimize the threat of aggression inherent in any organized armed force. Such threats often stimulate arms races and countervailing offensive doctrines. By bringing military structures into line with defensive political goals, the non-

provocation standard facilitates the emergence of positive political relations and trust among nations. In contrast, any doctrine and force posture which is oriented to project power into other countries is provocative – unless reliably restrained by political and organizational structures.

For countries that have experienced serious ethnic and political strife, it is of great importance that the national security apparatus itself does not contribute to centrifugal forces. Military functions must be depoliticized, and police functions should not be militarized. The composition of forces should reflect the ethnic balance of the nation as closely as possible. Full-time troops should generally serve nationally, while a greater proportion of part-time troops serve locally. Both full-time and part-time (national/local) forces should be thoroughly integrated and interdependent so that civilian control can be assured even in times of great strain to national political consent. Implementation of an effective confidence-building defense must take into account *context, international relations*, and a process of *optimization*.

Forces optimized for defense will nonetheless retain considerable offensive capability on the tactical level. This offensive capability may have strategic significance from the perspective of neighboring states. Thus planning must be sensitive to the provocative nature of many military options, particularly in cases of large asymmetries in power among nations. While recognizing that defensive-restructuring on a national basis cannot by itself relinquish all offensive potential, planning options that minimize interstate tension and distrust should be preferred.

The institutionalization of *confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs)* can normalize the exchange between states of doctrinal

and defense planning information and provide forums for assessing the regional impact of various national defense planning options. The notion of *confidence-building defense (C-BD)* includes most types of CSBMs. But while CSBMs emphasize matters of communication and procedure, confidence-building defense pays particular attention to the impact of military structures and doctrines on confidence and stability.

The planning problems inherent in the simultaneous objectives of affordability, robustness, reliability, and non-provocation require astute attention to *optimization*. Optimization of the application of resources toward the attainment of objectives should be a goal of any institution. However, military policy options should be evaluated in light of their impact on the matrix of intra- and international social, political, and economic relations. Only then can military-technical considerations, such as the tactical performance of particular weapons platforms, be understood for what they are: an important but insufficient basis for policy optimization.

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