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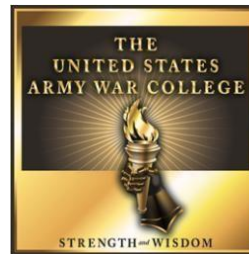
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Stumbling Toward Strategic Failure: Transitioning to Rotational Forces in Korea

by

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Stumbling Toward Strategic Failure: Transitioning to Rotational Forces in Korea

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Abstract

The Army's Brigade Combat Team (BCT) is the foundation of force projection and is a strategic asset vital to stability in Asia and Europe. Despite the intransigence to negotiate and provocative pursuit of strategic nuclear weapons by North Korea, during the same period (2003 to 2012), the United States (U.S.) military was under political pressure to draw-down its forces and was faced with dramatically reduced funding under sequestration in 2013. Despite the growing threat, the U.S. forces on Korean peninsula began to shrink as a permanently stationed BCT initially withdrew in 2003, and then 12 years later replaced the forward stationed U.S. Armor BCT in South Korea with a rotational BCT in 2015. The Department of Defense (DoD) must maintain credible force presence and related force projection capabilities to provide "assurance" to allies in East Asia. This paper focuses on a review of the Army's ability to respond to the complex threat in North Korea, the historical identity of forward stationed units and the unique culture that is interwoven within South Korea's communities, and provides options for adjusting or reversing current strategy.

Stumbling Toward Strategic Failure: Transitioning to Rotational Forces in Korea

The key to readiness is ensuring that U.S. and Republic of Korea forces are properly trained and equipped and that follow-on forces are fully trained and capable of deploying on a tight timeline. Failure to maintain a high level of readiness leads to strategic risk against a well-armed North Korea possessing asymmetric capabilities.

—General Curtis M. Scaparrotti¹

The security and economic stability of the United States and its allies in East Asia are a priority matter for the current administration. For 63 years, the U.S.-South Korea Alliance has provided a powerful deterrent and maintained peace in the region.² Every U.S. President since Eisenhower has had to ensure U.S. forces could deploy with sufficient forces in time to deter aggression and, if deterrence failed, fight and win against a range of threats to East Asia. Differently, President Obama, in his National Security Strategy, focused on exercising U.S. economic strength as the foundation for our national security and influence abroad.³ Unexpectedly, President Obama's "rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific" coincided with Kim Jung-Un (KJU) assuming power and the North Korean leader's subsequent announcement in 2012 that North Korea would suspend nuclear tests and allow inspections.⁴ However, KJU's pledge only bought him additional time to continue his strategic nuclear program and led to his first ballistic missile test in 2013. Importantly, since 2009, there has been no progress with Six Party Talks (involving the United States, China, North and South Korea, Japan, and Russia). These talks began in 2003 and were intermittently conducted through 2009, despite calls for their resumption by multiple parties since then.⁵ In the almost eight years since talks were suspended, KJU has continued his nuclear and ballistic missile programs and appears to be on the verge of fielding a nuclear-armed missile that could reach U.S. soil.⁶

The first visits by the U.S. Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State to Korea occurred in February and March of 2017. The immediacy of these high level visits demonstrates the new Administration's anxiety with the security and stability of the region. Despite the intransigence to negotiate and provocative pursuit of strategic nuclear weapons by North Korea, during the same period (2003 to 2012), the U.S. military was under political pressure to draw-down its forces and was faced with dramatically reduced funding under sequestration in 2013. The U.S. forces on the Korean peninsula began to shrink in 2003 as the Department of Defense (DoD) withdrew a permanently stationed Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), and then 12 years later replaced the forward stationed U.S. Armor Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) in South Korea with a rotational brigade in 2015. Maintaining forward stationed brigades and/or rotational battalions and brigades across the globe is essential to support trans-regional partnerships and assure regional stability.⁷ The DoD must maintain credible force presence and force projection capabilities to provide "assurance" to allies in East Asia.

Close relationships with Allies are critical for access, basing, and providing additional capabilities for the actual conduct of combat operations. The Chief of Staff of the Army's "By, With, Through Strategy" depends on both the credibility of our resolve to act and the feasibility of committing sufficient forces in time to defeat regional threats. It has been three years since the first rotational brigade deployed to Korea and there has only been *one* comprehensive study of the rotational brigade concept, written by War College Professor John R. Deni.⁸ His study is a thorough look at rotational brigades versus forward stationed brigades in Korea and Germany. Rather than focusing on

rotational costs as the rationale for change, this paper reviews the Army's ability to respond to the complex threat in North Korea, the historical identity of forward stationed units and the unique culture that is interwoven within South Korea's communities, and provides options for adjusting or reversing current strategy.

Alliances and Partnership

The command relationships between the United States and its partners and allies have varied throughout the nation's history, and the strength and nature of the partnerships influenced how well the partnered and allied nations fought together. From the earliest days of U.S. history, U.S. militiamen and soldiers trained with and fought alongside foreign partners.⁹ The partnerships were based on coincident interests, varied in intensity depending on the range of social, political, security and economic factors and were reinforced and forged in blood when circumstances dictated.

Through repeated military-to-military activities, partner armies develop close relationships, share insights and develop commonality in tactics, techniques, and procedures, and improve the combined "operational compatibility" required for anticipated combat operations. The strength and level of partner tactical and "operational compatibility" requires geographical proximity and unit-to-unit continuity as local forces train together, resolve discontinuities and increase operations integration. Conceptually, combined operations progress in varying degrees of force-wide compatibility:

(1) ensuring communicative consistency with common technical architectures (message formats, file structures, info sharing protocols, data exchanges, and common terms and graphics, etc.);

(2) the connectivity of systems architectures (shared intelligence analyses, common operations performance drivers, and near real-time friendly force situational awareness such as unit type, current location, activity and intentions); and

(3) achievement of force interoperability (seamless cross functional application of combat, combat support and combat service support capabilities synchronized in time, space and purpose) to overwhelm and defeat the enemy.¹⁰

Correspondingly, the effectiveness of multi-national operations progresses through close interactions gleaned from collective training and, the actual conduct of combat operations. Over time, employment of combined forces evolve from “de-conflicting” operations by separating the national forces in time, space and assigned objectives (separate battlespaces) to prevent fratricide and cross-purposes; to “coordinated operations” where the combined headquarters pro-actively “stitch the seams” and close the gaps between de-conflicted operations; to finally achieving “integrated and interdependent” operations where multi-national forces achieve interoperability and synergy through the employment of combat functional capabilities.¹¹ Achieving fully integrated U.S.-ROKA (Republic of Korea Army) combat operations allows both nations to share and capitalize on the each other’s most effective capabilities at the decisive point and time.

Over the last 17 years in Iraq and Afghanistan, rotational units maintained and developed rudimentary partner relationships in relatively short 4-12 month intervals, which made developing effective cohesive partnerships and achieving “integrated” operational proficiency problematic and has resulted in the Army’s recent creation of the Security Force Assistance Brigades.¹² Relationships in those short spans only allow tactical units to focus on specific mission readiness and tactical effectiveness; usually enabling only basic “de-conflicted” or U.S.-advised co-lateral operations known as “By, With, and Through” (BWT).¹³ That BWT operational approach that is typical of United States Army Central and United States Central Command is the conduct of “military

campaigns primarily by employing partner maneuver forces with the support of U.S. enabling forces through a coordinated legal and diplomatic framework.”¹⁴

During the OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF)/OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) decade of persistent conflict, the U.S. Army became accustomed to the unit rotational model as a means of sustaining force presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the Korean peninsula has a different operational and cultural context. Faced with a clear, present, and increasingly lethal threat to millions of South Koreans, which now promises to threaten the U.S. homeland, close operational U.S.-ROK relationships are critical for achieving the highest level of combat force integration. As described by the United States Forces Korea (USFK) Commander in the 2017 Korea Strategic Digest:

Since 1950, the United States’ alliance with South Korea has been evolving to meet the mutual security interests of both nations. The relationship continues to grow - standing as a critical deterrent to the dynamic North Korean threat, supporting regional engagement with partners and enhancing responsiveness to contingencies through rotational deployments and multinational training exercises.¹⁵

Similar to early U.S. and Allied operations in Europe and Asia, U.S. efforts with the ROKA from 1950 to 1953 resulted in a unique military partnership. Immediately following the three year war where over 33,000 U.S. troops were killed, the United States and South Korea signed a *Mutual Defense Treaty*, “Which provides that if either party is attacked by a third country, the other party will act to meet the common danger.”¹⁶ Despite our strength in partnership and shared history, newly assigned soldiers must be educated to understand and actively enhance the bonds between the U.S. Army and ROKA to further exploit the security benefits that forward stationing has on East Asia stability. As part of new soldier orientation, all 2nd Infantry Division (ID)

soldiers receive comprehensive orientation on Korean culture and U.S.-Korean history, to include a visit to the 2nd ID Museum.¹⁷ Differently, the ROKA is comprised largely of conscripted soldiers, who have varying levels of appreciation for the partnership and alliance with the U.S. Army at either the macro or micro level.¹⁸ This alliance is a result of a common enemy and the U.S.-ROK shared concern for stability in East Asia.¹⁹ However, the strategic unity of effort and commitment to the political and military alliance does not necessarily equate to operational compatibility and close working relationships at the brigade level or below.

As many combat leaders have learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, it takes more than just de-conflicted or coordinated co-lateral operations to capitalize on U.S. and host nation unique and complementary combat capabilities to build viable tactical and operational measures for their integrated employment. During OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and OPERATION NEW DAWN, a commander listed two quotes from his Iraqi Division-level partners (*2-7 Infantry Campaign Plan*): “The message I want to send is there is no difference between *jundi* (Soldier) and *shurta* (Security Force). We are all the same”²⁰ and “We must stand, hand-in-hand together, so the enemy cannot attack our seams.”²¹

After fourteen years of conducting operations with host nation forces in Iraq, success still depends on the strength of the Iraq-U.S. partnership and the associated execution of effective combined (U.S.-Iraq) operations in order to implement the *Strategic Framework Agreement*. The implementation of that agreement would allow the United States to transform “from occupier to strategic partner supporting Iraqi ministries in the security, economic, diplomatic and cultural arenas.”²² Unfortunately, the trust and

cooperation of soldiers on the ground and from the leaders who spoke those words in the previous paragraph were not always congruent, and “success becomes less about what we can achieve than what we can encourage and promote our host nation partners to achieve.”²³ The disparity between what was desired vice what was attained was significant as U.S. partnership transitioned from ABCTs partnering at platoon and company level from 2004-2008 and transitioned to an advisor role at Division and Corps level from 2009-2011.²⁴ U.S. Army force rotations and attendant personnel turbulence forces units to introduce and train soldiers on the importance of the partnership while actively combat advising.

Against the resilient and obstinate threat from North Korea, strategic success will depend on whether a cohesive, well trained combined U.S. and South Korean force can prevail. This requires allied air-ground operations to be fully integrated, which requires a level of cross-nation combat proficiency very difficult and time consuming to attain.

For combined operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. commanders frequently commented that their partners were in the lead, despite the forceful nature of U.S. “following.” Although, assessments were usually inflated, U.S. commanders were required to report on the relative “strength of partnerships” at daily and weekly updates. Importantly, these reports were treated with the same readiness value as combat vehicle availability or fuel status. Similarly, treating U.S.-host nation partnerships as a reportable item (pacing item) may be a viable option for rotational U.S. forces deployed in Korea.

As a point of reference in understanding rotational forces and culture, it is important to draw some distinctions between the Iraqi Security Force (ISF) and the

ROKA forces. U.S. brigade commanders cannot deploy to Korea with the same mindset they had about their ISF partners--where commanders found themselves training and coaching an inferior military. Interactions frequently devolved to the United States assuming a more authoritative role in ordering or directing ISF soldiers like subordinates rather than counterparts or professionals. This undermined partnership efforts in Iraq and will be even more damaging in Korea where ROKA forces are highly capable. The U.S.-ROK partnership was developed and reinforced over time but is still vulnerable to disruption and reversal by the irresponsible behavior of U.S. soldiers whose attitudes are tainted by service with less capable ISF soldiers. Understanding the history of the U.S. Army in Korea is an important aspect in educating U.S. soldiers on their role in both continuing past relationships and continuing progress towards full U.S.-ROKA integration.

History of Combined Partnership in Korea

The relationship between the U.S. Army and ROKA forces dates back to the Korean War. The 8th U.S. Army, and specifically the 2nd ID, was the first unit to reach the Korean War directly from the United States, and fought hard alongside South Korean forces in battles throughout Korea. During the War, the Korean Augmentee to the United States Army (KATUSA) program began informally as an initiative from ROK President Syng-Man Rhee, and was the first major step towards building partnership in the newly formed ROK-U.S. Alliance.²⁵ Throughout the war, these volunteers fought and died alongside their American brethren. To this day, the KATUSA program continues to strengthen bonds between the ROKA and the U.S. Army. The U.S. mission in Korea could not be accomplished without KATUSAs who make up approximately ten percent of every U.S. formation. However, their physical assignment to U.S. organizations

prevents them from directly interacting with ROKA units and thus cannot serve as a means for coordinating or communicating with those entities and help in building or strengthening partnerships.

For decades after the Korean War, no other significant form of training partnership existed aside from the KATUSA program. However, the alliance remained strong through common missions--U.S. and ROKA forces held the demilitarized zone (DMZ) together and conducted combined theater level exercises--but had little interaction and limited interoperability at the unit level. Field grade Officers participated in largely symbolic social gatherings to represent the strength of the alliance. In an interview, Lieutenant General (Retired) Woodall indicated that, while he served as the 1ABCT Commander in the late 1970s, the ROKA battalion task-organized to him served only as an opposing force unit and never participated in any interoperability exercises or social bonding activities. He later served as Division Commander of the 2nd ID in the late 1980s and helped improve U.S.-ROKA operational interactions during major combined exercises.²⁶

Few other official reports address the degree of integration of U.S. and ROKA forces in training or command exercises or with paring individual U.S. Battalions with similarly task-organized ROKA Battalions. However, there is evidence that units were initially paired in partnerships for the defense of the Oujambu Heights. Clearly the ROK-U.S. Alliance has a long history, but the Alliance has still not moved toward a higher level of integration or achieved their force-wide interoperability potential. Notwithstanding the lack of operational integration, the cultural bonding gained by

stationing of U.S. forces with their families demonstrated U.S. commitment to the security of the peninsula and helped solidify the partnership.

Importantly, a common cultural affinity grew among the over ten thousand Warrior Soldiers who rotated in and out of Korea for assignments to 2nd ID, and with the other 30,000 U.S. service members stationed across the peninsula. Not surprisingly, many of the soldiers married Korean spouses and, over time and through multiple assignments to the peninsula, became part of the Korean communities in proximity of their U.S. installations. Additionally, roughly 6% of the U.S. military identifies themselves as Asian, Asian Pacific, or Pacific Islander, and when circumstances warrant, frequently seek assignments to their region of heritage.²⁷ At USFK headquarters and below, U.S. soldiers who chose to extend their tour of duty and/or volunteered for repeated assignments to Korea were termed “Korea Careerists.” These Soldiers provided key institutional knowledge on a wide range of country-specific customs, community protocols and regional and local idiosyncrasies. They served as unit “continuity” for a wide range of host nation social, military operational and training related information. For instance, they were a font of knowledge about trafficable and key terrain, actual road and bridge conditions and choke points, local ROKA unit standard operating procedures, personalities of local politicians and ROKA leadership, and community attitudes and local problem areas. In many instances they occupied important positions in U.S. units by performing as master gunners, leadership positions of Division, Joint and Combined Operations Command Centers, or served in U.S. transportation and logistics headquarters and interacted/liaison with ROKA counterparts. These same soldiers often retired or separated in-country and assumed civilian employment on the

U.S. installations and performed key ROK-U.S. sensitive responsibilities such as managing U.S. training ranges across Korea. Those soldiers, especially the Korean-American soldiers with extended families in local communities, helped build cohesion and trust between their units and the Korean community, and provided continuity for units otherwise undergoing turbulent annual individual rotations. They also helped establish and sustain close relationships with local host nation authorities essential for cooperation during crises.²⁸

Leaders build teams through personal and professional interactions that, over time, mature into mutual trust and partnerships. Such bonds are not established between organizational 'positions,' but by the people that occupy them. At the maneuver brigade level in Korea, U.S. and ROKA leaders dedicate the time and effort to develop personal and professional relationships that provide the foundation for improving trust and enabling professional cooperation. Both the U.S. and ROKA forces are poised and ready to fight tonight. They are geographically located to immediately assume their battle positions and they train on the ground where they expect to fight. With the advent of 2nd ID as the Army's first combined division, now represented as a single division among twenty-one other combat divisions in Korea, 2nd ID's role has evolved from being advisors and semi-independent co-lateral combat participants into coordinated operational cohorts. The partnership is defined by the USFK Commander's number one priority: "Sustain and strengthen the Alliance through increased combined activities and communications."²⁹ However, even this partnership could be improved by maturing the level of combined operations proficiency from basic de-conflicted and coordinated

operations at the higher echelons to more integrated and interdependent operations at every level.

There exists a host of combined social activities that are used to improve the partnership: like participating in events like Chosuk (Korean Thanksgiving) and Lunar New Year Celebrations with families and community leaders. Notwithstanding the necessity of using these social events to establish and improve social bonds, the most important U.S. contribution is the sharing of combat experiences with their ROKA counterparts. This takes a significant investment in valuable training time to provide what the ROKA forces most desperately want--lessons from the U.S. recent experience in combat. In many instances, U.S. officers and noncommissioned officers have actually done what each Korean officer and non-commissioned officer has trained for their entire lives. Though only a third of the current U.S. formations have any combat experience, ROKA primary interests are learning about actual "leadership in combat." Ultimately, they want to understand "how battalions and brigades best prepare for and prosecute combat."

Eighth U.S. Army Today and the Transition to a Rotational ABCT

The 2nd ID in Korea is both the physical manifestation and symbol of the United States' commitment to South Korean security and regional stability. Based upon a wide range strategic factors including the advent of OIF and OEF, there has been a slow decrease in the number of U.S. forces in general, and the Second Infantry Division in particular, that began in 2003. Understandably, the Global War on Terror (GWOT) demanded sustained combat operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan and put a strain on U.S. force capacity that was felt in Korea. The initial drawdown in Korea started in 2004 when the 2nd "STRIKE" IBCT was deployed to support OIF. This deployment was

a significant change to the Warrior Division, as Strike Brigade included two light infantry battalions and one tank Battalion. Those light infantry battalions had been key partners with the ROKA for combined training in air assault and airborne operations across the peninsula. The loss of Strike Brigade resulted in a significant loss of capability, immediately constraining the existing combined force ability to seize and hold key mountainous terrain. Although it was not initially specified that this would be a permanent reduction of 2nd ID forces, once deployed, the Strike Brigade did not return and eventually redeployed from Iraq to Fort Carson, Colorado. There it reflagged as an IBCT as part of the 4th ID.³⁰

Concurrently, in 2004, U.S. Foreign Policy focus shifted from Europe and East Asia to the Middle East and the GWOT. South Korean leaders were concerned by the loss of military power during a time which they felt like their growing economy and combined U.S.-ROKA military overmatch was mostly responsible for the improved talks with North Korea for re-unification. Additionally in 2004, South Korea sent its first ROKA troops to Iraq for operational support in Irbil.³¹ ROKA forces maintained a largely supportive role in Iraq, and did not engage in direct combat action. In 2004 during the U.S. President's Republican National Convention nomination acceptance speech, Koreans were upset that President Bush neither listed South Korea as a contributing member to the Coalition, nor did he mention the drawdown of troops in Korea.³² Asia was omitted as a topic during the 2004 election and was only mentioned in Presidential correspondence as an example of success and economic prosperity. With that as a backdrop, it is clear why ROK President Roh moved forward with negotiations calling for

major base closures north of Seoul and for approval of the ROK- funded relocation plan of U.S. 8th Army to Camp Humphreys.

As the United States began force draw-downs in OIF and OEF and reductions in total force structure, the United States also began considering OIF/OEF-like rotations for U.S. forces in Korea. As detailed by Professor Deni in his report, the argument for a rotational brigade in Korea was sold on improving its readiness posture; however, the real reason for the drawdown was based on a budget model indicating rotational forces would save increasingly constrained funds.³³ The 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review* applied the Military Value Analysis, along with other analytical tools, to suggest a reduction of twelve BCTs.³⁴ Following the *Budget Control Act* of 2011, overseas reductions were deemed necessary, and the Army Chief of Staff (CSA) had to start managing brigade strength to improve deployment readiness. On June 25, 2013, the CSA announced that 10 BCTs based in the United States would be reorganized by 2017, and that the two ABCTs in Germany would be inactivated, reducing BCTs from 45 to 33.³⁵ As the pressure for reduction of forces continued, in “November 2014, the Army announced it would cut an ABCT from South Korea and replace it with a rotationally deployed brigade from the United States.”³⁶

Complex overseas stationing factors make accurate comparative cost analysis problematic. However, Professor Deni’s review of rotations to Europe found that a rotational model is not cheaper.³⁷ The cost issue is less dependent on force rotational costs and service-member benefits than the associated costs of families: moving, overseas housing, installations, schools, medical care, commissaries, etc. To further confuse the comparative data, there is a mix of fund types being used to finance

rotational Brigades including funds for training, movement by air and sea, temporary duty benefits, operational costs, training costs, installation costs, etc. This makes capturing comparative costs even more complex. Despite the fact that several studies conducted over the period 2003-2010 had conflicting cost analyses, civilian authorities and military commanders made the decision to first eliminate the overseas brigades as they reorganized Divisions in the Continental U.S. (CONUS) to meet mandated force reductions.³⁸

With a new administration and reduced political pressure to downsize the military, it is now more politically feasible for the Army to re-visit the comparative costs (both in operational effectiveness and financial) associated with rotating versus forward stationing an ABCT in Korea. Professor Deni's report focuses on the European model, but the data is also applicable to Korea, and suggests a saving of \$140 million annually in favor of forward stationing an ABCT in Korea. The savings is based on a computed rotational cost of \$1.19 billion versus \$1.05 billion for a forward stationed ABCT.³⁹

The 2nd ID was the last forward U.S. division in the world to maintain a forward stationed ABCT. The 1st ABCT was just south of the DMZ in Camp Casey, where it had been since for over sixty years, since the end of the Korean War. Although the 8th Army and the 2nd ID have relocated to Camp Humphreys, Korea, there is no longer a permanently assigned ABCT. Similar to the U.S. drawdown in Germany, 8th Army shifted to a rotational ABCT but maintained its Fires Brigade, Aviation Brigade, Theater Sustainment Command, and separate direct support brigades and battalions as permanent forward stationed forces.

Current Strategic Environment

The United States is faced with a growing threat from North Korea that threatens both the stability of East Asia and the security of the U.S. homeland. Additionally, the possible U.S. response to this growing threat to the homeland may serve as the catalyst for a renewed conventional war in Korea.⁴⁰ Despite the increase in South Korean self-defense capability, the security of Korea, Japan, and other U.S. interests in the region depends in large measure on the U.S. military forward presence. Although the United States can respond relatively rapidly with air and naval power, projecting U.S. ground forces is much slower, yet these additional land forces are essential for deterring aggression and implementing associated theater war plans with ROKA forces. The near continuous provocations by KJU are serious and, with his successful weapons development and cyber programs, make the threat more credible.⁴¹ Moreover, KJU's provocative activities appear unresponsive to international pressure or sanctions. Although North Korean ground forces are unlikely to prevail over those of South Korea and its allies, North Korea's significant artillery and missile capabilities would cause severe civilian and military casualties that would be magnified by insufficient or less capable forward stationed allied land forces.⁴² Clearly, recent North Korean progress on fielding an intercontinental ballistic missile system further poses a significant security threat to the U.S. mainland, U.S. regional interests, and its East Asian regional allies.⁴³ This increased threat requires both credible deterrence and optimized Allied ground force capabilities.

Adding to the strategic complexity, the region has increased instability due to multiple land disputes related to the South China Sea. Although China's policies for the South China Sea are seen as aggressive and illegal, the world-wide attention given to

its provocative actions has dominated regional actors' and United Nation (UN) attention and taken some diplomatic pressure off of North Korea.⁴⁴ Increased tension with China demands a more visible commitment to the security of East Asia, which could be signaled by permanent forward stationing of additional U.S. military forces in Korea and Japan.⁴⁵ There is further signaling as the Pentagon recently announced a potential increase of a Marine Expeditionary Unit into East Asia with a potential forward basing in Korea.⁴⁶

Globally, U.S. National Military Strategy maintains focus on the "4 +1 Framework," meaning a prioritization to four threats including Russia, China, North Korea and Iran, and one additional persistent conflict of countering transnational violent extremism. When talking about global threats and the framework, the Secretary of Defense, General Dunford said, "I can't imagine any conflict that we would be involved with in the future being narrowly focused in one region. It would have transregional implications right away and then multifunctional [ones]."⁴⁷ As an example, just as the United States focuses its defense statecraft on Asia, there is an immediate concern in Europe, as Russia is quick to exploit any lack of U.S. capability or resolve in responding to provocations in Eastern Europe. With U.S. and Russian conflicting interests in the Balkans, Professor Deni also makes a case for a return of permanently stationed Armored Brigades in Europe.⁴⁸ Military strategists and planners now struggle to maintain rotational obligations to Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Poland, and Korea. What makes Korea unique is the growing consequences of insufficient combat power to deter and decisively defeat North Korea and the central role that the 2nd ID, and its primary ABCT ground maneuver force, has within the Theater Campaign Plan.⁴⁹

Organizational Theory and Continuity in Partnerships

All organizations are formed to perform a specified purpose. According to W. Richard Scott, “The development of organizations is the principle mechanism by which, in a highly differentiated society, it is possible to ‘get things done,’ to achieve goals beyond the reach of the individual.”⁵⁰ The organization’s purpose is usually tied to some social structure that is either largely closed within the organization, or porous or open and interwoven with the surrounding environment.⁵¹ Organizational interactions can have an impact on power and status, but can also “provide the setting for a wide variety of basic social activities, such as socialization, communication, ranking, the formation of norms, the exercise of power, and goal setting and attainment.”⁵² Although organizations, especially those in the military, can look similar and have common features, their internal social structures and cultures can have different collaborative pursuits and goals.⁵³ Applicable to the Korean security context, Levitt’s Diamond (Figure 1) provides an organization model that portrays organization relationship dynamics and depicts existing boundaries between the internal structure and processes and the external “environment.” The model also represents a symbiotic relationship between internal components (social structure, technology, goals, and participants) together with their connectivity through a porous organizational boundary (dotted line) with the external environment. For comparison in this paper, the ABCT will be treated as the organization, since its rotation or permanent forward stationing is the central issue.

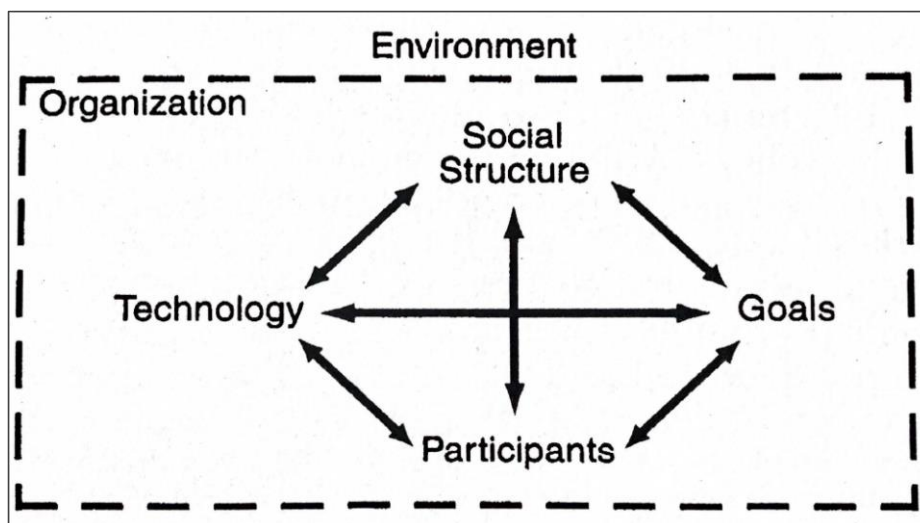


Figure 1. Leavitt's Diamond: A Model of Organization.⁵⁴

ABCT Internal Organization

For the U.S. Army, which arguably is overly absorbed with achieving standardization across like units, there is a great deal of similarity across many of the internal aspects of the organizational model depicted above. All U.S. ABCTs are similarly equipped (available technology), formally structured exactly the same, train to similar tasks, conditions and standards, and during combat operations, are called upon to achieve assigned missions (goals). For example, the activities/goals for decisive operations could include: attack to destroy the enemy and/or seize key terrain; defend to destroy the enemy and/or deny the enemy from achieving their objectives; conduct retrograde operations to gain time, etc. However, there are two important distinctions that differentiate ABCTs highlighted in the above model relevant to comparing forward stationing vice rotational options: the influence of internal social structures and the unique aspects of the external environment.

Internal Social Structures

Notwithstanding the major organizational commonalities between all U.S. ABCTs, most organizational theorists recognize that every organization has unique properties tied to the distinctive talents of its assigned individuals that also become embedded in how that organization functions internally and interacts externally. Richard Daft and Karl Weick describe organizations as “open social systems that process information from the environment.”⁵⁵ Through iterative interactions within and external to the organization, each organization develops “information processing mechanisms” that uniquely define how they detect and interpret “trends, events, competitors, markets, and technological developments relevant to their survival.”⁵⁶ They argue that “[o]rganizations have cognitive systems and memories.⁵⁷ Individuals come and go, but organizations preserve knowledge, behaviors, mental maps, norms, and values over time.”⁵⁸

Related to embedded mechanisms for interpreting the external environment are established organizational *cultures* and more transient organizational *climates* that further define how organizations behave. Both cultures and climates can vary substantially between different ABCTs.⁵⁹ These varying social characteristics are often overlooked in standardized military organizations but have important implications for “continuity with allied partners” when addressing trade-offs between rotating vice permanent stationing of an ABCT in Korea.

Other social structures in ABCTs can also differ substantially. For instance, the presence of a key cohort of the previously described “Korea Careerists” and the Asian-American/Pacific-Islanders that, through tour extensions and repeat assignments, migrate to permanently stationed forces on the peninsula provides an inherent social advantage for forward stationed ABCTs. This cohort aids in interpreting interactions and

building and maintaining external partnerships that also provides a higher level of organizational openness. The measure of success for an organization operating within an environment should be analyzed at the ecological level, which “focus[es] on the characteristics or actions of the organization viewed as a collective entity operating in a larger system of relations.”⁶⁰ Korea Careerists help define and refine the “system of relations” that, in turn, improves the collective performance of the allied combined forces.

Differentiating Influences of the Strategic Environment

For military operations, perhaps no factor reveals more cross-organizational differentiation than the influence of the operational and strategic environment. The external environment is the canvas that strategic and operational artists paint their concepts and campaigns. On this canvas, all other differing factors are adjudicated by the competitive consequences generated by the opposing sides and measured by the comparative loss of life and levied destruction. The stakes are serious. The geo-political context of war dictates the character of war. Environmental factors can magnify organizational differences in many ways: familiarity with the effects of local terrain on force employment; first hand insights on enemy force intentions; intimate knowledge of allied force capabilities and how adjacent and higher units will operate, actions and reactions to combat exigencies; timely and accurate information sharing of intelligence estimates; and near real-time sharing of friendly force information on unit specific types/locations/activities/and future intentions. The related ABCT comparative organizational proficiencies and propensities can decide battles and wars. These same effects create significant disparities in the projected effectiveness of permanently

stationed forces vice those rotated annually. Most of these factors are affected by the strength of association between the ABCT and ROKA forces.

Army forces measure their ability to accomplish assigned missions and win battles, campaigns and wars by assessing their unit readiness. A common way the Army assesses unit “readiness” is by conducting rotations at the National Training Center (NTC) and, upon successful completion, rotational units are determined “ready” and “deployable.” Currently, U.S. combat brigades are measured on training objectives focused on a force-on-force (direct action) model that is inconsistent with the “Mission Essential Task List” trained by forward stationed units in Korea. The training in NTC by rotational units deploying to Poland and Germany is coarsely similar to the environmental conditions expected in Eastern Europe; however, are not applicable for units deploying to Korea. Currently, NTC rotations are not adjusted for a Korea-focused context.

The NTC context does not reflect the conditions expected in Korea. In broad terms, the Korean operational environment includes: rugged terrain; an understanding of a foreign culture; unique North Korean tactics and doctrine for enemy forces; mission requirements addressing nuclear weapons seizure/control; and many others. The differences of terrain alone makes it impossible to see how training tanks, artillery, mortars, and dismounts across a vast desert, with a few mountain ridges and passes, prepares rotational brigades for steep mountainous terrain with narrow valleys filled with rice paddies and limited open terrain. In designated defensive positions in Korea, combined forces can rarely place more than a vehicle section or infantry platoon on line,

and nearly every offensive operation will be conducted in complex terrain or within a defile. The desert of NTC cannot replicate Korean terrain for Brigade-level operations.

Despite the physical limitations of the NTC, there must also be adjustments to unit training objectives in order to be “ready” for Korea. Training and Doctrine Command gives annual training guidance and approves all training objectives for every unit that trains at NTC. In the unit’s Mission Letter to NTC, division commanders outline expectations for the unit and the Commander, Forces Command (CFC) further shapes those objectives during the unit’s Deployment minus 150 Days (D-150) Brief. Training objectives are specific to preparing heavy forces to conduct direct action in their expected theater. Significantly, the last two rotations at NTC (4th quarter 2017) were USFK and European Command focused, and training objectives at the brigade level were inexplicably the same.⁶¹

The 8th Army is the action arm of the USFK for mission support and CFC for ground forces. As listed in the 2017 *Strategic Digest*, “In time of crisis and hostility, USFK has a supporting operational role with a focus on non-combatant evacuation for American citizens as well as designated third country nationals and reception, staging, and onward movement, and integration for U.S. and multinational augmentation forces.”⁶² Although the mantra of “Fight Tonight” connotes a short-notice response against an attacking North Korean ground assault, it is more likely that the in-country ABCT will be involved with the evacuation of over 230,000 Americans in Korea, which also includes 28,500 family members of U.S.-forward stationed service-members, not to mention an even larger amount of third country nationals distributed across Korea.⁶³ Minus the counter-fire fight assigned to the Fires Brigade, the rest of the 2nd ID will

likely spend the first six months of any conflict conducting reception, staging, and onward movement of the arriving U.S. forces responsible for conducting a follow and support role to the ROKA ground forces as they roll back any North Korean incursions.

Once the war transitions to the offense, plans call for ROKA forces to lead the attack, allowing U.S. forces follow, supporting and securing captured nuclear proliferation sites. The strategic situation on the peninsula has evolved, and it is also possible that there will be a coordinated dash to nuclear sites by both China and U.S. forces.⁶⁴ Portions of the forces surviving the counter-fire fight, and anticipated initial decisive ground combat operations, will eventually transition to stability operations in both South and North Korea. Other combat capable forces will likely continue to attack north with their ROKA counter-parts to seize and secure nuclear sites. The anticipated mix of combined U.S.-ROKA operational missions have never been trained outside of Korea, and are the most important tasks that a rotational brigade can rehearse before assuming mission responsibility. Correspondingly, 1ABCT added, "Isolate an Enemy/Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Site" as a Mission Essential Task in 2014, and showed improvement in combined training in underground facilities over the last three years. Also, in 2013, NTC added a WMD Site as a company lane to train infantry companies for the supporting company level task, but has yet to identify it as a battalion mission. While companies at NTC practiced a unilateral kinetic reduction of a WMD Site, 1ABCT was training for bilateral operations in securing, identifying and reducing WMD sites as a Brigade Mission as part of a Division Warfighter command post exercise. The 2nd ID's efforts over the last four years resulted in the creation of Army Techniques Publication 3-90.40, *Combined Arms Countering Weapons of Mass*

Destruction, yet brigade training objectives for NTC have still not adjusted to address this important task.

The context for measuring readiness of ABCTs for rotations to Korea should represent proficiency on the missions and conditions they will face in Korea. While progress can be made to better match those conditions in CONUS and the NTC, it is near impossible to replicate the benefits of training with ROKA counterparts on the terrain both forces will actually fight. Moreover, the key aspect of that in-country training is the *continued* development of partnerships built through multiple interactions and codified in established protocols, unit common standard operating procedures, and practiced information system interoperability. With in-country bilateral training, enhancing ABCT readiness also acts as the *way* for achieving the *goal* of strengthening the U.S.-ROKA partnership.

Brigade commanders cannot conduct their Mission Essential Task List Tasks in Korea without executing them as combined operations; and building and reinforcing the Alliance is not a mission that can be trained or rehearsed in CONUS before deployment. The reason that building the partnership is the central aspect of the 2nd ID Commander's top two priorities for the entire Division is because he understands the importance of the Alliance in accomplishing *every* objective. An important example of "Building the Alliance" is 8th Army's designation of 2nd ID as a Combined Division. In January 2015, 2nd ID started a complete integration of their Division Headquarters with the assignment of thirty ROKA officers. The commander commented in an interview, "It really takes the strength of the U.S. Army and our forces, and the strengths of the ROK military, and together you have a much more powerful organization."⁶⁵

Getting Combat Capable Units to the Fight

It is important to understand the critical role that the single ABCT performs within the Korean operational context. At the outset of a potential short-notice conflict, the U.S. ABCT will be the sole ground maneuver force for the 2nd ID and 8th U.S. Army. The ABCT serves as the focal point for the tactical employment of nearly all U.S. combat support capabilities and is the backbone of the initial U.S. strategic response. It is critical that its substantial capabilities be employed to their highest potential, at the best possible readiness level, fully synchronized with other supporting arms, and integrated within the combined U.S. and ROKA operational concept. Simply put, the ABCT is the center of gravity for U.S. initial responses to the full range of potential North Korean provocations or attacks. This single ABCT positioned in Korea will also set the conditions for the successful integration of follow-on U.S. combat ground forces deployed primarily from home stations in the United States.

The reduction of military units caused by the OIF/OEF drawdown resulted in significant political pressure to reduce forward stationed U.S. forces and retain CONUS based forces. Some military strategists also believe that forward stationing is an antiquated way to source contingencies, and that “forward-deployed posture has lost much of its operational value in terms of contingency responsiveness.”⁶⁶ A RAND report also states that “lighter ground forces can deploy by air from the United States almost as quickly as they can from within a region.”⁶⁷ However, much of the supporting analyses assume the availability of theater and strategic lift resources that themselves are insufficient for meeting the increased demands inherent in deploying mostly CONUS based forces into overseas contingency areas.

The idea that sufficient combat power can deploy from the sea within a reasonable amount of time is no longer feasible, and was recently highlighted by Senator John McCain in testimony when he pointed out that the United States is “already 10 ships short of the current requirement--enough to move two full armored combat brigade teams.”⁶⁸ In an attempt to highlight the capacity limitations of our strategic transportation resources, the Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) Commander, General McDew, indicated, “We can do 200 C-17s.”⁶⁹ The snarky comment demonstrates the limitations that an ABCT faces as it plans deployments, as a C-17 can only carry a single tank and an ABCT has 90 tanks and another 114 single-load vehicles. A single push of 200 C-17s would only deliver the primary fighting vehicles, minus personnel, and would not support the essential 300 (plus) wheeled vehicles required to operate, maintain and resupply an ABCT, to include a fleet of 15 x 5,000 gallon and 48 x 2,500 gallon fuel tankers. Confirming the sarcasm, there are only 200 C-17s in the Air Force inventory, with 187 Active Duty, 12 Air National Guard, and 14 Air Force Reserve, whose deployment would cause a major disruption in planned global support.⁷⁰

Another regional expert, General (Retired) Ham, commented on TRANSCOM’s struggles to meet strategic lift requirements, “This shortcoming undermines conventional deterrence--and may help explain the increasingly aggressive actions of Russia in Europe since 2008.”⁷¹ Ham’s comments reinforce the idea that KJU has increased his ICBM and Nuclear Program as a result of the loss of credible deterrence caused by the reduction of forces in Korea and the reliance on a single rotational ABCT force. Ham argues that the strategic lift shortfall does not just constrain the deployment

of required ground combat forces, “This will affect not only deployment of our high-profile Brigade Combat Teams, which account for only 20% of the Army’s initial sealift requirements, but also the flow of critical enabling forces and initial sustainment stocks upon which the joint force depends.”⁷² As the Army has grown accustomed to reliable theater air support for movement of sustainment stocks during OIF/OEF, another shortfall in the Air Force creates a “growing strategy-resource mismatch: a widening gap between what our leaders say they want to be able to accomplish, and what the nation’s USAF can actually accomplish.”⁷³ In the same commentary, the former Air Force general goes on to explain the effects of sequestration, “Congress is on a path to continue imposing resource constraints on the military that inhibit meeting the demands of our national security strategy....Combat readiness doesn’t have a constituency--except for the entire nation--when fighting needs to be accomplished.”⁷⁴ He also goes on to point out that not all of our combat in the future will be afforded air superiority, and full spectrum operations will tie up much of our air combat resources.

Comparative Proficiency: Personnel Turbulence, Cohesiveness, and Continuity

Traditionally, forward stationed U.S. forces in Korea endured high manning turbulence due to the assignment of a large number skill level one (E1-E3) soldiers (some straight from Basic Training and Advanced Initial Entry Training), and other soldiers deploying for what was termed a “hardship tour” (12 month unaccompanied assignment). Deni points out those forward stationed units suffer from an 8% turnover of personnel every month, based on the standard one year assignments of most soldiers assigned in tactical units at Division and below. This relatively high turnover rate undermines training readiness, cohesiveness and unit collective training proficiency for forward stationed units and requires collective training to be renewed almost at quarterly

intervals. Conversely, rotational brigades deploying for 9 months arrive with brigade-level collective training already achieved, and its personnel are stabilized in the unit for the duration of the deployment. Collective sustainment training must still be accomplished, but at much longer intervals. What forward stationed ABCTs gain with increased continuity with host nation forces that enhances partnership combined force integration is somewhat degraded by personnel turbulence that undermines the collective proficiency and cohesion comparatively achieved by rotational ABCTs. There are measures to mitigate these negative consequences while retaining the organizational benefits of forward stationing.

One measure to reduce personnel turbulence is to increase the personnel authorizations and assignment of personnel to the ABCT. For instance, the previous manning target for the ABCT was 90% and that was increased to 100% strength in 2011.⁷⁵ This could be increased to 110%, as was done for high priority Special Operations Forces. The additional 10% provides “manning slack” that improves present-for-duty training and reduces turbulence. Another option is to increase the soldier tour-length to 24 to 36 months and make the assignments accompanied. This would significantly reduce turbulence, further improve continuity, and likely improve cohesion and tactical proficiency of forward stationed forces beyond those attainable by rotational forces.

The additional manning approach could be augmented with pay incentives for volunteers and still be more economical than rotational ABCTs. A recent RAND study looked across the Services to determine how to reduce permanent change of station (PCS) moves by extending “Time On Station” for service-members in overseas

assignments. The RAND study showed that an average of 40% of officers and enlisted service members would volunteer to extend overseas tours by a year *without* an incentive at a potential PCS cost savings of \$95 million (DOD-wide).⁷⁶ For various incentives, RAND determined “the range of savings that could be achieved with incentives structured...is somewhere between \$19 million and \$84 million annually, totaled across all four services.”⁷⁷ According to their survey data, almost 90% of service members stationed overseas would volunteer for an extension for an incentive of up to 35% of their base pay.⁷⁸

The current 8th Army Commander suggested another alternative to address the disruptive turbulence caused by short tours. He proposed to increase every tour in Korea from twelve months to 24 months and any accompanied twenty-four month tour to thirty-six months. The Commander has already applied a similar informal policy to all commanders at battalion level and higher to ensure leader continuity at each headquarters; and it has proven effective.⁷⁹ This proposed strategy for all soldiers assigned to Korea is similar to General Casey’s Force Stabilization (FS) policy introduced in 2007 as a complement to the implementation of the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) model, except the FS policy explicitly excluded forward stationed BCTs in Europe and Korea. The 8th Army Commander proposal would specifically target assignments to a proposed forward stationed ABCT Brigade.⁸⁰ This stabilization policy is also expected to produce cost savings to the government. Significantly, DoD spends \$4.4 billion a year across all services on PCS, with \$1.5 billion spent on transoceanic moves alone.⁸¹

If the Army were to re-establish a forward stationed ABCT and increase tours of duty to 24-36 months (based on military specialty, duty positions and using incentive programs), turbulence would be mitigated and readiness would increase. Even soldiers who are reporting from advanced initial training (first-termers) would have a steep learning curve as the majority of their peers and leadership would have extensive country experience and knowledge of the Area of Operation to impart, enabling rapid assimilation. Largely due to time and training restraints, a nine-month rotational unit would not be able to develop this kind of relationship within units and would lack those “Korea Careerists” who are vital for sharing institutional knowledge and sustaining the continuity of ROKA partnerships.

Alternative: Mitigating Rotational ABCT Readiness Challenges

Clearly rotational ABCTs face an overwhelming challenge adjusting to the unique Korean operational environment and preparing for potentially immediate employment against a possible North Korean threat. The arriving ABCT must quickly form new relationships with ROKA partners; become conversant with the family of Operation Plans and Concept Plans; conduct collective training on related battle tasks within the unique Korea context with ROKA counterparts; reconnoiter battle positions; learn the nuances of local customs and protocols; and generally adjust to a foreign culture. Importantly, rotational U.S. Army aviation units face similar challenges with their deployments. The Korean control of airspace, complex restrictive flight measures, and active South Korean air defenses that heighten the risk of fratricide, all require detailed overlap by rotational aviation units that could better inform ABCT rotations.

Aviation squadrons and battalions have been rotating to Korea as an additional asset to the 2nd ID Aviation Brigade since 2014. The 2nd ID Combat Aviation Brigade

was actually the first to test rotational assets in Korea, where 4th Attack Reconnaissance Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment, from Joint Base Lewis McChord, initiated a nine-month rotation in September of 2013.⁸² An aviation unit can only conduct so much home station training, and they must physically be in the region to fly the terrain and certify crews. The process of relief in place and certifying pilots takes a month, which means that during a nine month rotational execution, a battalion is getting trained one month, executing missions for seven months, and then training the new unit for one month. The degradation in readiness associated with rotations is somewhat compensated by the extensive overlap of aviation unit rotations.

Conversely, the overlap of ABCTs in Korea is currently only seven to ten days, which leaves little time to reconnoiter the terrain, assimilate the culture, or handover relationships with local Korean units or support organizations. Based upon the constrained overlap, almost the entire time is spent in transferring property and conducting inventories of vehicles and equipment.⁸³ The current plan for heel-to-toe rotations, which increases combat readiness, only allows for the accomplishment of limited tasks. Using the Aviation model as a template, rotational ABCTs could conduct a lengthier and more thorough overlap that would help close the discontinuities inherent in rotating ABCTs. Rotational units could shift to an eleven month model and an ABCT could arrive to Korea, fire gunnery, and then go through a certification at the new Korean Combat Training Center (KCTC).

This KCTC idea will require considerable diplomatic and military leader negotiation, as the new KCTC is a state of the art complex that is intended for ROKA units and is equally as busy as the U.S. Army's NTC with 18 rotations a year.⁸⁴ Eighth

Army units have only recently been able to participate in a combined role at the KTC, and usually only with aviation units as their participation does not require a significant ground footprint or substantial logistical support. However, this level of combined training is exactly what rotational units are missing, as the nine-month rotational model has yet to align with a very strict ROKA Annual Training Calendar. Notwithstanding, the unit cost of committing two ABCTs to the deployment for a required extensive 2-month overlap, the challenge of sourcing a KTC from ROKA, and the loss of continuity inherent in making the transition between two distinctly different ABCTs all create costs not associated with a continuous forward stationed ABCT. A forward stationed ABCT could also capitalize on the extended tours of assigned soldiers to attenuate individual personnel turbulence while providing continuity by sustaining and continuing to build on established organizational relationships with ROKA partners.

Despite the significant challenges facing rotation brigades, there is a collective benefit to the overall Army in immersing different ABCTs into the Korean operational environment and exposing them to the clear and present threat of a possible North Korean attack. The deployment requires rotational ABCTs to accomplish the complex tasks listed above, and in doing so, develop important unit Korea-focused proficiencies and individual competencies.⁸⁵ This is especially important when and if those units must return as part of a contingency response for North Korean aggression. However, it is significant to note that the reported dramatic improvement of rotational units' combat effectiveness occurred over the course of the 9 month deployment, and that during that entire period, they could have been called upon to respond to a North Korean attack at their current readiness level. Their reported dramatic improvement in readiness may be

indicative of the risk that rotational units and the 8th U.S. Army assume, especially when ABCTs first arrive. Moreover, some of the shared Korean operational experience would also be accrued Army wide with the individual rotations of soldiers into a forward stationed brigade.

Rotation-Driven Insufficient ABCT Capacity

As the Army ARFORGEN model illustrated over a decade of implementation, rotating forces requires the commitment of three ABCTs to be able to continuously deploy one. Usually, one ABCT is deployed, one preparing for deployment, and one is returning and recovering from deployment. Currently the Army rotates one ABCT in Europe, one in the Middle East, and one in Korea. Each require 3 ABCTs for sustained rotations, for a total of nine. This requires all of the current nine active duty ABCTs to be committed to the rotations and leaves little flexibility to respond to other strategic exigencies without seriously affecting the 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio. There are also five ABCTs in the U.S. Army National Guard (USARNG) that could also help assume the rotational missions, but preparing these ABCTs for deployment incurs substantial additional costs and the need to overcome significant training challenges in preparing for brigade-level decisive operations. The total time a USARNG ABCT would need to be mobilized for both the dedicated preparation training and deployment, and occurring primarily during peacetime, would also be politically and economically sensitive.

In order to address the current demand and improve U.S. flexibility to respond other crises, the Army has recently announced that it plans to re-establish one, and possibly two, additional active duty ABCTs.⁸⁶ It is important to note, that the need to increase ABCT capacity is directly related to the Army decision to “rotate” those ABCTs vice forward stationing one or more in theater. The substantial costs associated with

increasing the number of ABCTs to support rotations should be considered when assessing the opportunity cost savings of forward stationing. If the Army determines that other factors also justify an increase in ABCTs, then it should take this opportunity to re-establish and forward station the 1st ABCT in 2nd ID and resume its role within 8th Army. This would also avoid the political fallout associated with removing a CONUS stationed ABCT from a Congressional district. Once established as 1st ABCT, and using the model of 2 CAB, it can be operationally enhanced by rotational units associated with executing related contingency plans responding to the full range of potential North Korean aggressions. A forward stationed ABCT, periodically complemented with other rotational units, sends a strong positive signal to our allies and partners, while improving the proficiency of coordinated and integrated combined operations.

Conclusion

Kim Jung-Un is committed to pursuing a nuclear ballistic missile capability that will threaten the U.S. homeland and, from his perspective, guarantee the survival of his regime and solidify his power. In 2015, KJU declared, "Our nuclear capacity is our guarantee of protecting our national sovereignty, and allows us to build peace, prosperity and power, as well as the happiness of our people."⁸⁷ KJU's commitment to fielding a nuclear weapon that threatens the United States is matched by President Trump's determination that he not attain that capability. With this impasse, the prospects for armed conflict are growing, along with the risk to South Korea and U.S. deployed forces.

The forward presence of combat units in Korea has been the symbol of U.S.-Korea military cooperation and an effective deterrent since the Korean Armistice

Agreement was signed in 1953. Prominently, the U.S. National Military Strategy calls on the military to, “Provide a Global, Stabilizing Presence. The presence of U.S. military forces in key locations around the world underpins the security of our allies and partners, provides stability to enhance economic growth and regional integration, and positions the Joint Force to execute emergency actions in response to a crisis.”⁸⁸ The likelihood of conflict in Korea is arguably increasing more rapidly than many other exigent threats in other regions. East Asia is not a region to accept imprudent risk; especially those associated with the 8th U.S. Army’s sole ground maneuver force.

There are advantages and disadvantages associated with either rotating or forward stationing an ABCT in Korea. The competing factors are complex and ambiguous. Maintaining a rotational force posture creates windows of vulnerability during at least the initial arrival period, incurs additional operational discontinuities with NTC training incompatibility, allows for insufficient overlap, and suffers the absence of a cohort of Korean Career soldiers possessing Korea-specific institutional and cultural expertise. As postulated in organizational theory, if “organizations preserve [emphasis added] knowledge, behaviors, mental maps, norms, and values over time,” then switching 8th Army’s ABCT organization and its ground force “center of gravity” every 9 months in the face an increasing North Korean threat may qualify as “imprudent” and lead to strategic failure.⁸⁹

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