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SECTION IVSTRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING US SECURITY

Korea's current significance to the security of the United States lies in the fact that it is the critical point of contact between the US and the Soviet Union in the Far East. Basically, however, Korea is important to the US because Soviet control of this strategically situated peninsula would jeopardize US political aims for China and Japan, thus threatening US security measures throughout the Pacific.

Under joint US-Soviet occupation Korea is one of the most unstable political compounds in the Far East. The prevailing uncertainty of its political future is attributable mainly to the prolonged delay in the execution of the Moscow Decision, which has kept Korea divided and subject to dual foreign control. Instead of the former occasional and superficial contacts with the West, the peninsula has now been opened to the influence of the two chief world powers. Unlike the Japanese rule which isolated the peninsula and bound the people together in common resistance to a single regime, thereby fortifying Korean national unity, the US and Soviet occupations have divided the Koreans and opposed them to each other. Thus, subsequent to joint US-Soviet withdrawal, the Korean political vacuum will be filled by a polity which has a foreign orientation toward either US democracy or Soviet Communism.

The emergence of a unified Korea under Soviet domination would constitute a serious political defeat for the US. In China, where US prestige has declined since V-J Day, the attendant moral lift to the Communists and the demoralizing effect on moderates would make very difficult the unification of China under a government favorably disposed toward the Western Powers. In Japan, any democratic government nurtured by the US during its period of occupation would, in the post-occupation period, face an external situation posing an additional threat to its stability at a time when internal problems taxed its powers most heavily. The effect in China and Japan of a communistic Korea would in turn have repercussions in the whole of southeast Asia, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

The political confusion which has retarded Korea's unification and independence has also hindered its economic recovery. Partition has been the chief cause of economic disruption because of the interdependence of the two zones of occupation. Economic stability is ultimately dependent on unification. Meanwhile, grants-in-aid from foreign sources are required. Hence the extent to which the US is willing and able to meet Korean economic requirements will figure importantly in US ability to attain its political objectives.

While both the US and the USSR are directly concerned with the political future of Korea, the long-term military considerations are of

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lesser importance to US security than to that of the USSR. The USSR has indicated that the security of the Siberian frontier is a principal objective of Soviet policy in its relations with Korea, and that for this reason Korea must be established as a "friendly" (i.e., subservient) state. A hostile power in Korea would be in a position to cut off Vladivostok from Port Arthur and intercept communications generally throughout Manchuria, whereas a friendly power in the peninsula would protect the Soviet flank and contribute to Soviet capabilities for offensive operations in northeast Asia. While US troops occupy Japan the US has a vital interest in maintaining a position in Korea which will protect its position in Japan and North China. In the post-occupation period, even though the US might still desire to deny the peninsula to a potential enemy of Japan or China, Korea's indefensible position against attack from the north makes it of less interest to the US, since the US first line of defense near Korea is the US Pacific Islands Defense Base System.

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