

US Policy Planning towards Korean Unification: A New Approach

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Abstract

Unification is the fundamental policy issue for in both North and South Korea. Although American specialists in Korean affairs recognize the importance of this issue, US policy planning for unification and for dealing with a reunified Korea is replete with inadequacies. Planning for US policy could be improved by creating a US Center for Korean Unification Studies to examine the pros and cons of various options and be an instrument for an expanded dialogue between Americans and Koreans from both Koreas. While the United States should develop such a scholarly policy Center on its own, given its track record, it probably will not. Therefore it is the interest of Koreans in both Koreas to back the creation of such a Center and become active participants in the activities of the proposed Center – research, conferences, and publications. This is particularly salient for South Korea’s many unification-oriented organizations because of the way such a Center would greatly expand US-DPRK interactions in a manner that would benefit the ROK’s stake in the inter-Korean negotiations process.

Key Words: unification, US policy planning, reunified Korea, US-DPRK relations, negotiations process

Korea's history as a divided nation is replete with Korean efforts to address an evolving set of divisive issues. It is very clear to Koreans in both Koreas and non-Koreans who specialize in Korean affairs that reunification of the Korean nation is the fundamental issue for Korea.¹ It is equally clear to Koreans in both halves of the divided nation that the US role in their division, US policies toward the two Koreas, and the United States' potential roles in Korea's future have been, are, and will be crucially important to Korea. American analysts - across the political spectrum, who follow Korean affairs from different perspectives and draw different conclusions - basically agree that those Korean perceptions are fully warranted.² Despite those circum-

¹ For a cross-section of analyses in English on the importance of Korean unification, see Kim Hakjoon, *Unification Policies of South and North Korea: A Comparative Study* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press 1978); In K. Hwang, *The Neutralized Unification of Korea* (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing 1980); Rhee Sang-woo, *Security and Unification of Korea* (Seoul: Sogang University Press 1984); Kwak Tae-hwan, Kim Chong-han, and Kim Hong-nak (eds.), *Korean Unification: New Perspectives and Approaches* (Seoul: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Kyungnam University 1984); Choy Bong-youn, *A History of the Korean Reunification Movement: Its Issues and Prospects* (Peoria: Institute of International Studies, Bradley University 1984); John Sullivan and Roberta Foss (eds.), *Two Koreas - One Future?* (Lanham: American Friends Service Committee & University Press of America 1987); Harold Hakwon Sunoo, *Peace and Unification of North and South Korea* (Beverly Hills: Research Institute for Juche Idea in the USA and One Korea Movement in USA 1989); Jay Speakman and Lee Chae-jin (eds.), *The Prospects for Korean Reunification* (Claremont: Keck Center, Claremont McKenna College 1993); Thomas Henriksen and Lho Kyongsoo (eds.), *One Korea? Challenges and Prospects for Reunification* (Stanford: Hoover Institution 1994); Kim Yun and Shin Eui-hang (eds.), *Toward a Unified Korea* (Columbia: Center for Asian Studies, University of South Carolina 1995); Nicholas Eberstadt, *Korea Approaches Reunification* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1995); Jong Ri Gun, *Korea's Reunification - A Burning Question* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House 1995); Choi Jinwook and Park Sun-song, *The Making of a Unified Korea: Policies, Positions, and Proposals* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification 1997); Roy Richard Grinker, *Korea and Its Futures: Unification and the Unfinished War* (New York: St. Martin's 1998); Jonathan D. Pollack and Chung Min Lee, *Preparing for Korean Unification: Scenarios and Implications* (Santa Monica: RAND 1999).

² For diverse Korean and American analyses of North and South Korean perceptions of the United States' role in Korean affairs (in addition to the views expressed in the previous citations), see Frank Baldwin (ed.), *Without Parallel: The American-Korean Relationship Since 1945* (New York: Pantheon Books 1973); Harold Hakwon Sunoo, *America's Dilemma in Asia: The Case of South Korea* (Chicago: Nelson-

stances, a strong case can be made, and is made by many of those cited above, that US policy towards Korea as a divided nation, the two Korean states' long quest for reunification, and the prospects for dealing with a united Korean nation state leaves much to be desired. They contend that US policies on those issues are replete with inadequacies.³ US foreign and defense policy makers and analysts who are not specialists in Korean affairs - who constitute the vast majority of those officials and scholars - pay very little attention to the core issues

Hall 1979); Claude A. Buss, *The United States and the Republic of Korea: Background for Policy* (Stanford: Hoover Institution 1982); Han Sung-joo (ed.), *After One Hundred Years: Continuity and Change in Korean-American Relations* (Seoul: Asiatic Research Center, Korea University 1982); Ronald A. Morse (ed.), *A Century of United States-Korean Relations* (Washington, DC: Wilson Center 1983); Koo Young-nok and Suh Dae-sook (eds.), *Korea and the United States: A Century of Cooperation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1984); James I. Matray, *The Reluctant Crusade: American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941-1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1984); Rosemary A. Foot, *The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950-1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1985); Edward A. Olsen, *US Policy and the Two Koreas* (Boulder: World Affairs Council of Northern California & Westview 1988); Robert A. Scalapino and Lee Hong-koo (eds.), *Korea-US Relations: The Politics of Trade and Security* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California 1988); Chang Jongsuk, *Diplomacy of Asymmetry: Korean-American Relations to 1910* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1990); A. James Gregor, *Land of the Morning Calm: Korea and American Security* (Lanham: Ethics and Public Policy Center/University Press of America 1990); Robert Sutter and Han Sung-joo, *Korea-US Relations in a Changing World* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California 1990); Doug Bandow and Ted Galen Carpenter (eds.), *The US-South Korean Alliance Time for a Change* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers 1992); Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (Reading: Addison-Wesley 1997); Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton 1997); Tong Whan Park (ed.), *The US and The Two Koreas* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner 1998); Wonmo Dong (ed.), *The Two Koreas and the United States* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe 2000); Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse: The Future of the Two Koreas* (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics 2000); Selig S. Harrison, *Korean Endgame, A Strategy for Reunification and US Disengagement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2002); Edward A. Olsen, *Toward Normalizing US-Korea Relations, In Due Course?* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner 2002); Ted Galen Carpenter and Doug Bandow, *The Korean Conundrum, America's Troubled Relations with North and South Korea* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2004).

³ For others who criticize the soundness of contemporary US policies toward Korea, see Alliance of Scholars Concerned About Korea (<http://asck.org/>).

involved in a divided Korea and are poorly prepared to plan for a reuniting or reunited Korea. The net result of these factors is that US policy planning towards Korean reunification suffers profoundly from that relative inattention.⁴ In this context, there is a need to visualize a figurative advertisement stating - “WANTED: A US Center For Korean Unification Studies” that can generate support for such a Center capable of innovatively spawning more thoughtful approaches to US policy planning towards Korean reunification.

Inadequate Planning

There are certainly a number of US universities and think tanks that are deservedly well known for engaging in research on Korean affairs. Readers of this journal undoubtedly are very familiar with them.⁵ Many of the US-based studies cited in this analysis are linked

⁴For examples of American analyses of how the United States might better cope with the challenges posed by Korean unification, see Selig S. Harrison (ed.), *Dialogue with North Korea* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 1989); David R. McCann (ed.), *Korea Briefing: Toward Unification* (Armonk: Asia Society and M.E. Sharpe 1997); Henry D. Sokolski (ed.), *Planning for a Peaceful Korea* (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College 2001); Katy Oh and Ralph Hassig (eds.), *Korea Briefing, 2000-2001: First Steps Toward Reconciliation and Reunification* (Armonk: Asia Society and M.E. Sharpe 2002); Robert Dujarric, *Korean Unification and After: The Challenge for US Strategy* (Indianapolis: Hudson Institute 2000); Eberstadt, *Korea Approaches Unification* (op. cit.); Grinker, *Korea and Its Future* (op. cit.); Harrison, *Endgame* (op. cit.); Olsen, *Toward Normalizing US-Korea Relations* (op. cit.).

⁵For information about those US centers that deal fully or partially with Korean studies, see the following website and their links to other sites, listed alphabetically: Alliance of Scholars Concerned About Korea (<http://asck.org/>); American Enterprise Institute (www.aei.org); Asia Society (www.asiasociety.org); Center for Korean-American and Korean Studies, California State University, Los Angeles (www.calstatela.edu/centers/ckaks/); Center for Korean Studies, University of California, Berkeley (<http://ieas.berkeley.edu/cks/>); Center for Korean Studies, University of Hawaii (www.hawaii.edu/korea/); Center for Northeast Asia Policy Studies, The Brookings Institution (www.brook.edu/fr/cnaps/center_hp.html); Asian Studies Center, Heritage Foundation (www.heritage.org); Korea Economic Institute of America (www.keia.com); Korea Institute, Harvard University (www.fas.harvard.edu/~korea/); Korea Society (www.koreasociety.org); Korean Studies Program, University of

to those universities and think tanks. However, none specifically focuses on Korean unification issues. Equally important, even those universities and think tanks, which also enjoy a sound reputation for US foreign policy studies, do not routinely integrate their Korean studies and US foreign policy studies programs. At most these programs may overlap when American specialists in Korean affairs expound on US foreign or defense policy or when some US foreign policy specialists selectively draw upon the output of the Korea specialists. For most Korean specialists in US-Korean relations who interact with their counterpart specialists in Korea-US relations from the United States at conferences and other meetings, it is all too easy to be reassured by their familiarity with the issues of common concern and therefore about the depth of US expertise.

Most such Korean specialists in US affairs do not regularly interact with US foreign policy specialists who are not - at least in part - focused on Korean issues. In recent years that latter category has expanded to include numerous US specialists in nuclear proliferation and counter-terrorism issues who familiarize themselves with the threats posed by North Korea. However, when it comes to the basic inter-Korean issues centered on Korean reconciliation and reunification, Koreans on both sides of the divided nation would be shocked at how little the great majority of American specialists in overall US foreign and defense policy actually know about the numerous issues involved with Korean reunification and its potential ramifications for US policy. Still worse, these Koreans likely would be appalled if they understood how little such generic US foreign and defense policy specialists pay any attention to the Korean nation's core issue and

Michigan (www.umich.edu/~iinet/ksp/); Korean Studies Program, University of Washington (<http://jsis.easc/koreastudiesprogram.html>); National Bureau of Asian Research (www.nbr.org); Nautilus Institute (www.nautilus.org); Pacific Forum, CSIS (www.csis.org/pacfor/); Rand Corporation (www.rand.org); UCLA Center for Korean Studies (www.isop.ucla.edu/korea/).

often treat it as something that is largely irrelevant to US national interests.

While Americans who hold such views have every right to be ignorant of, or indifferent to, the issues at stake in Korea if and when it reunifies, Koreans - on both sides - who disagree with such perceptions have major incentives to educate these Americans about what matters to Koreans and why that should, in turn, matter to Americans. Koreans who favor such an “education” agenda already have allies within US society among the Korea experts in the university-based and think tank-based organizations noted above as well as others who are unaffiliated. There is a sizable pool of empathetic American analysts who are supportive of the inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification agendas’ importance to US policy.⁶ This situation can be improved by Koreans in both Koreas visualizing the “WANTED” advertisement and responding by backing the creation of such a “US Center” that would be the counterpart of several comparable institutions in the ROK⁷ and the DPRK.⁸

⁶ Most of those cited in Footnote 4 are part of the “pool.”

⁷ The following institutions - listed alphabetically with their websites - are supportive of the ROK’s position: Academy of Korean Studies (www.aks.ac.kr); Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University (<http://gsis.snu.ac.kr>); Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security (www.ifans.go.kr); Institute for Korean Unification Studies, Yonsei University (<http://suny.yonsei.ac.kr/~ikus/index.html>); Korea Development Institute (www.kdi.re.kr/eng/index.asp); Korean Institute for Defense Analyses (www.kida.re.kr); Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (www.kiep.go.kr); Korea Institute for National Unification [with extensive links] (www.kinu.or.kr); *Korea Focus* at Korea Foundation (www.koreafocus.or.kr); Korean Government Homepage (www.korea.net); ROK Foreign Ministry (www.mofat.go.kr); ROK Ministry of Unification [with extensive links] (www.unikorea.go.kr); Sejong Institute (www.sejong.org/e-index.htm); Society of Korean-American Scholars (www.skas.org); *Vantage Point* (<http://english.yna.co.kr>).

⁸ The following institutions - listed alphabetically with their web sites - provide supportive information about the DPRK’s position: Center for Korean-American Peace (www.cfkp.com); *Chosun Journal* (www.chosunjournal.com); DPRK.com (www.dprk.com); DPRK-North Korea (www.kimsoft.com); Korea Reunification News (www.tongilnews.com); Korean American National Coordinating Council (www.kancc.org); One Korea (www.onekorea.org); Pyongyang Foreign Languages Publishing House (www.dprk.book.com/english/list); *Pyongyang Times* and

Why and how that should and could be done is worthy of serious attention in Seoul and Pyongyang. Without sanctioning the views of those Americans who are relatively indifferent to the Korean unification agendas' issues, they are correct that the core issues are far more central to Korean national interests than they are to US national interests. This is reflected in the large number of Korean institutions - South and North - that are committed to studying and implementing various options that will shape Korea's future. Had the United States' Civil War been prolonged for five or six decades by major power intervention,⁹ comparable institutions may have been created in the 1920s or '30s aimed at restoring the United States as one nation state. Such theoretical parallels between the two nations' civil wars should sensitize Americans to the intense Korean focus on reunification. Although the United States does not need such a "US Center" for the same reasons as Koreans, there is a strong case for Koreans to back the creation of an American counterpart for Korea's various unification-focused institutions. If such a "US Center" existed and was committed to exploring all the reasons why the United States has a stake in the various reconciliation options contemplated by the ROK and the DPRK, Americans would be far better prepared to deal with Korean realities than they are now. The United States would be more familiar with how Korean success or failure in pursuit of the various options would impact international affairs in the rest of Asia, how other countries in the region are likely to cope with Korean success or failure, what options the United States may have to confront regarding Korean reconciliation and reunification, and how the United States should expect to deal with a spectrum of policies emanating from a

Korea Today (www.kcckp.net/ko/news/foreignlang/times/index.php).

⁹The author explored that civil war parallel's significance for American sensitivities to Korea's plight in *Toward Normalizing US Korea Relations* (*op. cit.*), pp. 106-108.

future united Korean nation state.

Improved Planning Process

Assuming that a plausible case can be made for the merits of such a US research-focused counterpart to Korea's numerous institutions devoted to studying and planning for Korean reunification, Koreans - South and North - should confront the reality that if the US government wanted such an institution, it would create one either within the government or in tandem with a private sector university or think tank. The lack of any such organization in the United States today is arguably indicative of the relative lack of US interest in this issue. That is not to suggest that individuals within the US government - especially those who work on Korean affairs - share that indifference. On the contrary, many of these individuals are likely to be supportive of the concept, but they recognize that they are in a distinct minority and lack the bureaucratic or legislative influence to create any such American entity. Similarly, Korea specialists in academia or think tanks have to be pragmatic about the realities of which Korean issues loom largest for most US officials - hence the relatively low profile of Korean unification issues. They are dwarfed by nuclear and economic issues for the great majority of American foreign and defense policy specialists who pay any attention to Korea. These issues, as well as the broader international, historical, and intercultural issues are the kinds of scholarly themes that enable existing US university-based and think tank-based programs in Korean studies to garner support from either US-based foundations or from the federal government. Consequently, if Americans who would be supportive of such a "US Center" and its ability to interact with Korean counterparts have any chance to pursue such an endeavor, it will not be because of any US-backed initiative.

This creates an incentive for Koreans - South and North - to take the lead on this concept. In theory both Koreas have reasons to back this notion. In practice, because of North Korea's bleak economic situation that severely constrains its ability to play a credible financial role in any such endeavor. If any such "US Center" is ever to be created, financial and institutional support will come largely from South Korea in financial and institutional terms, with political support from both Koreas. Such support might be provided by a range of South Korean entities including the ROK government, foundations, universities, think tanks, and corporate backers. Ideally such support would emanate from a combination of these entities so that the "US Center" would reflect the diversity of those organizations and would be able to utilize a broad support network in carrying out its program activities. While such a "US Center" could be a joint center in terms of being located on two neighboring sites such as a US government educational or research facility and a nearby university, that form of duality probably would be less productive for the proposed Korean sponsors because of the differing bureaucratic mind sets in US governmental versus non-governmental settings. For example, were such a "US Center" to be involved in exchange programs with North Korean researchers or guest speakers, it would benefit from the greater flexibility permitted within a non-federal government academic milieu such as at a private or state-operated university. Consequently prospective Korean backers of any such "US Center" should avoid a joint center in favor of affiliating it with an acceptable university. That type of setting would also help improve the prospects for the "US Center" to broaden its support base over time by drawing upon US-based foundation support and, perhaps, federal government contractual support for some of the specific activities outlined below. To maintain its primary focus of improving US familiarity with the policy perspectives of the two Koreas, however, it would remain in the

interests of Korea to retain primary Korean support for the proposed “US Center.”

Planning Agenda

For present purposes this analysis shall assume a proposed “US Center for Korean Unification Studies” becomes a reality at “XYZ State University.” Center activities would, of course, be dependent upon the level of funding obtained. Although finance would be a major variable that cannot be predicted with any assurance, the spectrum of activities will be far greater with more funding. Less funding will inevitably mean fewer the activities.

A core activity would be a sequence of conferences or workshops on various aspects of Korean unification options that would bring together a broad spectrum of US specialists in inter-Korean affairs and a cross-section of North and South Korean specialists in unification issues who would present papers and engage in a dialogue before an invited audience of foreign affairs specialists from the US government and influential academics - neither of which is Korea experts. These US, ROK, and DPRK panelists would benefit from interacting with one another, while the audience would benefit from observing their interactions. The papers presented should either be published in edited volumes, in an online web site, or - if it can be arranged - in a special issue of one of the several journals that are interested in these issues.

As funding and space permits, the Center also should host visiting researchers on Korean unification and US policy towards Korean unification, with a conscious effort to have researchers from both North and South Korea interacting with US visiting researchers representing the progressive and conservative portions of the US analytical spectrum. The researchers should be in overlapping re-

sidence for at least a couple of months, possibly - for those on academic sabbatical - for up to a year. In addition to interacting with each other while in residence, and participating in any conferences and workshops held during their stay, all such researchers in residence should be made available to interact with US officials working on Korean issues and with representatives of the US media.

On the publications front, the Center should maintain a salient web site that would present the views of visiting researchers and conference participants. Moreover, this would provide a setting for the Internet dialogue between unification specialists from North and South Korea, their American counterparts, American specialists in Korean affairs, generic foreign, and defense policy specialists, and any Americans who become interested in the issues at stake. In addition, the Center should publish a series of occasional papers based on visiting researchers' work and disseminate the papers to relevant US officials and policy analysts. Based on the frequency of the periodic conferences and the marketability of the topics addressed, the Center should also seek to arrange commercial publication of the collected papers either as edited books or monographs.

Beyond such on-site activities, the Center should set up exchange programs between the United States and North Korea similar to the activities that have transpired between the United States and South Korea for many years. By exposing more Americans to North Korea, and more North Koreans to the United States, this would significantly strengthen the third leg of the triangular relationship in ways that would benefit both inter-Korean relations and US understanding of that relationship's potential to influence reunification.

All such activities would enhance US preparedness for Korean efforts to reunify Korea. To get a sense of how US preparedness would be enhanced by improved policy planning it is useful to consider how past US policy might have been more effective, had such a "US Center"

existed when inter-Korean relations explored new parameters. Two examples illustrate how opportunities may have been lost due to inadequate US attention to crucial nuances. When the Roh Tae-Woo Administration experimented with its *Nordpolitik* version of former West Germany's *Ostpolitik* engagement policies on the cusp of the late Cold War period,¹⁰ the United States was relatively passive in its reactions. South Korea was learning from West Germany's growing ability to induce change and reform in East Germany in ways that helped it accelerate the end of the Cold War. US policy may well have better positioned if the United States had more cogently evaluated how South Korea's initial geopolitical gamesmanship towards North Korea contained the potential for greater expanded ROK multilateralism designed to improve the inter-Korean dialogue process. This would have been predicated on both Koreas' improving bilateral ties with the four major powers that are today members of the Six-Party Talks on nuclear issues. At a minimum the United States would have been better prepared for how the two Koreas adjusted to the end of the Cold War and their efforts to learn lessons from Germany's reunification process. The United States certainly found ways to accommodate these developments, but not as effectively or as quickly as it might have if a "US Center" had analyzed the developments and proposed various options. This would have helped US policy adjust to the changes more effectively, but it might also have led the United States to be more supportive of the dialogue process - especially on the bilateral front with North Korea where US policy remains out of step with Seoul's inter-Korean agenda.

The second example is much better known to many Americans because of the publicity it received when President Kim Dae-jung

¹⁰For background on that effort, see Lee Seo-hang (ed.), *Evolving Multilateral Security Regime in Northeast Asia* (Seoul: Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security 1994); Young Hwan Kihl (ed.), *Korea and the World: Beyond the Cold War* (Boulder: Westview 1994).

received the Nobel Peace Prize that was a partial by-product of his Sunshine Policy and his North-South summitry.¹¹ Coming in the wake of the 1994 nuclear crisis that brought the United States and North Korea uncomfortably close to renewed warfare and launched a long term cycle of expanded negotiations, there is no doubt that Seoul's Sunshine Policy received ample attention in Washington and among US specialists in both Korean affairs and overall US foreign and defense policy. Nonetheless, a strong case can be made that expanded US attention to those Korean issues was ultimately skewed and distorted by broader US anti-proliferation policy criteria. Had there been a "US Center" at that time it would have provided more information on developments in North Korea's nuclear agenda and the broader inter-Korean issues framed by the Sunshine Policy. Better-informed Americans would likely have nudged US policy towards a more pragmatic approach to dealing with North Korean brinkmanship employing an approach modeled on South Korea's engagement policies. In short, it could have facilitated a thorough personal debate among US hardliners and softliners, hawks and doves, and other examples of a diverse spectrum of views that almost certainly would have improved the prospects for Americans coping better with the nuclear issue by putting it into the broader inter-Korean context favored by the policies of the United States' South Korean ally.¹² Even if this dialogue had not yielded direct results, it would likely have clarified the nature of the policy planning alternatives. These two

¹¹ For background on his policy and its initial results, see Chung-in Moon and David I. Steinberg (eds.), *Kim Dae-jung Government and Sunshine Policy: Promises and Challenges* (Washington, DC and Seoul: Georgetown University Press and Yonsei University Press 1999); Chon Shi-yong, "President Kim Wins the Nobel Peace Prize," *Korea Herald*, October 14, 2000, p. 1; Young Whan Kihl, "Overcoming the Cold War Legacy in Korea? The Inter-Korean Summit One Year Later," *International Journal of Korean Studies* (Fall/Winter 2001), pp. 1-24.

¹² The author explored that alternative in greater detail in his "A Korean Solution to the United States' Korean Problems," *Journal of East Asian Affairs* (Fall/Winter 2003), pp. 215-240.

past instances are examples of what could have been done then and how those circumstances can be instructive for future evolving problems on the inter-Korean front en route to reconciliation and reunification.

Post-Unification Planning

In addition, looking much further into the future, the Center should conduct the same spectrum of activities focused on US policy towards coping with Korea after it reunifies. These activities should address US options regarding a united Korea bilaterally as well as multilaterally in the context of US relations with China, Japan, Russia, and other countries as they all cope with the economic, political, and strategic realities surrounding a single Korean nation state on the Peninsula. These activities would address the ways Korean nationalism would be influenced by reunification, the impact of the various roles played by external players in Korean reunification upon a post-unification Korea, and - arguably most sensitive for the interim period - what impact reunification will have on the legacy of decades of the US-ROK security alliance relationship.

Lastly, and in part dependent upon the specific range of activities the “US Center” actually would conduct, this Center should do its utmost to interact and cooperate with all the existing US academic and think tank programs in broader Korean affairs for two reasons. Firstly, there is no reason for the proposed “US Center” to replicate any of their activities so it clearly would benefit by drawing upon all those established research programs and interacting with their researchers. Secondly, to the extent possible exposing all those programs to the reconciliation and reunification themes of the “US Center” would be an excellent way to proselytize the policy themes at the core of this Center. This would also be a way to send a clear signal

to all these other research programs that the “US Center” was not intended to replicate or replace any of them, but to supplement what they and the US government are either not doing or are doing in a marginal manner.

That relationship should be underscored by making it clear at the outset that the proposed “US Center” would have a finite purpose. It should be designed to help facilitate a more creative and enlightened US approach to dealing with the two Koreas’ and their regional neighbors’ approaches to Korean reunification. As those agendas are pursued and fulfilled in ways that resolve inter-Korean tensions and reunite the Korean nation into one Peninsular state, the Center can be helpful in shaping the debate over US policy options and guiding the United States towards a realistic relationship with the new Korea. Once that occurs, the Center can remain useful in the post-reunification era, helping US policy constructively encourage a stable environment that will be a catalyst for successful nation building in the newly reunited Korea. At that stage, however, the proposed “US Center” with its Korean support system should gradually be phased out of existence in recognition of having succeeded in its goals. In short, the ultimate job of this proposed “US Center” should be to work itself out of a job. However, if the track record of the “US Center” proves to be sufficiently successful to have warranted substantial US-based financial and administrative support for its research activities, and if its staff members are so disposed, it might be useful to convert it to a function similar to the other Korea-related research activities carried out at already well-established institutions. Nonetheless, that should not be the intention at the outset. On the contrary, the purpose of the “US Center” should be to innovatively foster an American dialogue over US policy options towards Korean reconciliation and reunification that will help accelerate that process by making the United States a catalyst for positive change as rapidly as feasible.

At that stage the legacy of the “US Center” will be recognized in the form of balanced and normal US relations with one united Korean nation state. The precise nature of those relations will be determined by the juxtaposition of Korean national interests and US national interests. Precisely where a Korea will fit into the United States’ larger approach towards Eastern Asia will be significantly shaped by the nature of US-China and US-Japan relations at that juncture. Similarly, the United States’ future role within the foreign and defense policies of a reunited Korean nation state will be influenced by Korean perceptions of the United States’ global role and its impact on overall Asian affairs, with special salience for a Korean Peninsular state amidst a complex Sino-Japanese relationship. While the potential for Korea-US relations in that future milieu should be promising if Koreans and Americans play their policy cards skillfully in the interim years, one must recognize that “balanced and normal” implies there will also be occasional frictions as there are in any bilateral state-to-state relationship. The “US Center” can help prepare the United States for the future by facilitating harmonious US-Korea relations that can cope with such frictions just as the United States does with many other nation states around the world. In conclusion, using the proposed “US Center” to improve US planning for an uncertain evolutionary diplomatic and geopolitical process will help both Koreas and the United States go through that process successfully in an innovative manner and to maximize their benefits from the results in a unified Korean nation state.