

The Western Pacific Collective Security  
Concept and Korea in the Eisenhower Years :  
The U.S.-ROK Alliance as an Asia-Pacific  
Alliance

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# **The Western Pacific Collective Security Concept and Korea in the Eisenhower Years: The U.S.-ROK Alliance as an Asia-Pacific Alliance<sup>1</sup>**

Yasuyo Sakata

## **I. Introduction**

The U.S.-ROK alliance has served to deter the North Korean threat and maintain stability and peace on the Korean Peninsula for over fifty years since its formation in the aftermath of the Korean War. But does it have a goal beyond peninsula security ---a goal beyond North Korea ?

This article examines this issue from a historical perspective. The history on the U.S.-ROK alliance emphasizes that the alliance was mainly a “local alliance” or “peninsular alliance” for peninsular security, to deter and defend against the North Korean threat. This certainly has been the primary role of the alliance. This article, however, sheds light on another, albeit a secondary, aspect of the U.S.-ROK alliance --- the alliance as a “regional alliance” or an “Asia-Pacific alliance.” It is argued here that the U.S.-ROK alliance served security needs beyond the Korean peninsula, in the broader

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<sup>1</sup> This article is an abridged version of the author’s paper titled, “The U.S.-ROK Alliance as an Asia-Pacific Alliance: The Western Pacific Collective Security Concept and Korea in the Eisenhower Years,” presented at The Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR), 2006 Annual Meeting, June 23-25, 2006 (Session VII, Panel 37: The U.S.-South Korean Alliance: Historical Perspectives on Current Issues), University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. I would like to express my gratitude to the panelists, Professors William Stueck, James I. Matray, Gregg Brazinsky, and Robert Wampler for the discussion and comments. Research was supported by the Kanda University of International Studies research grant.

Asia-Pacific region--- though confined in the context of the Cold War to contain the Soviet and Chinese threat.

The origins of the U.S.-ROK alliance as an Asia-Pacific alliance can be found in the U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) signed in October 1953.<sup>2</sup> The treaty was primarily signed as a “supplement” to the Korean Armistice Agreement (July 27, 1953), to ensure ROK cooperation to the Armistice (which President Syngman Rhee refused to sign). The U.S.-ROK MDT, however, was also designed as a Pacific defense treaty, modeled after the U.S.-Philippines and ANZUS (U.S.-Australia-New Zealand) treaties of 1951.<sup>3</sup> Similar to the Pacific treaties of 1951, the preamble states that both Parties, U.S. and ROK, cooperate for peace and stability in the “Pacific area”, and continue to do so, “*pending the development of a more comprehensive and effective system of regional security in the Pacific area.*”<sup>4</sup>

At the time of signing the treaty, the Eisenhower administration did not have specific plans for developing a “*more comprehensive and effective system of regional security in the Pacific area*”. This phrase was modeled after the 1951 Pacific treaties signed during the Truman administration.<sup>5</sup> But the

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<sup>2</sup> For this argument, see Yasuyo Sakata, “The Origins of the U.S.-ROK Alliance as a “Regional Alliance” : U.S. Policy on Asia-Pacific Collective Security and the Formation of the U.S.-ROK Alliance, 1953-54,” *Gunsu* [Military History] (Seoul: Institute for Military History Compilation, ed.) 57 (December 2005).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-63. The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty of 1951 and 1960 are, in substance, a Pacific defense treaty, but the text avoided reference to “Pacific” collective defense, and limited the treaty area to the security of the “Far East” to be defended by U.S. forces (not Japanese forces), due to constraints on the use of force and rights to collective self-defense in Article IX of the Japanese Constitution of 1947. Japan would contribute bases and facilities to U.S. forces for regional defense. Sakamoto Kazuya, *Nichibei Doumei no Kizuna* (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 2000); John Swenson-Wright, *Unequal Allies? United States Security and Alliance Policy Toward Japan, 1945-1960* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), chapter 6.

<sup>4</sup> “The Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the United States of America,” October 1, 1953 (effective November 1954), The War History Compilation Committee, ed., *The Treaties of National Defense, Volume 1* (1945-1980) (Seoul: Ministry of Defense, The Republic of Korea, 1981), 154-157 (emphasis added).

<sup>5</sup> The Truman administration had its own “Pacific Pact” idea with offshore island countries, Japan, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, but it was never realized. Sakata, *op.cit.*, 34-37.

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fall of Dienbienphu and the deepening crisis in Indochina in 1954 prompted the Eisenhower administration to develop its own concept for collective security in the Asia-Pacific, the Western Pacific collective security idea. The policy shift to Indochina, brought about new dimensions to U.S.-ROK security relations. The value of the U.S.-ROK alliance increased in the context of the Western Pacific collective security idea, and the Eisenhower administration consciously attempted to integrate South Korea into the process.<sup>6</sup>

Although the U.S.-ROK defense pact was designed as a Pacific defense treaty, there was an inherent difficulty for the U.S.-ROK alliance to function as a “regional alliance” like the other Pacific alliances. The burden of the peninsular defense was large. The parameters of the “Pacific area” were not clearly defined, because it was not necessary. The U.S. Forces in Korea (USFK) did not function as regional forces with strategic flexibility as in the case of the U.S. Forces in Japan. However, there was a role that the ROK forces could play in the collective defense of the Asia-Pacific beyond the Korean peninsula, namely in Southeast Asia. This aspect led to the South Korean participation in the Vietnam War in the 1960’s.

The Western Pacific collective security concept was never realized, due to ambivalence within the Eisenhower administration and with Asian allies, including Korea. But the legacies of the Eisenhower years led to the U.S.-ROK alliance cooperation in the Vietnam War period. Thus, the Eisenhower years can be described as the “embryonic stage” of U.S.-ROK alliance as an Asia-Pacific alliance, preceding the Vietnam War.

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<sup>6</sup> The early stage of this concept is discussed in *ibid.*, 62-71, 78-81.

In order to understand the “embryonic” phase of the U.S.-ROK alliance as an Asia-Pacific alliance, this article examines how the Eisenhower administration pursued the Western Pacific collective security concept in the 1950’s, with a focus on the Administration’s efforts--- its achievements and failures --- to integrate South Korea into this concept. The overall scorecard was not satisfactory, as the Western Pacific pact concept itself failed, but alternative patterns of regional security cooperation between the two countries grew out of this era, which, in turn, will be relevant to its evolution in the 1960’s.

## **II. The Western Pacific Collective Security Concept and Korea**

### **NSC 5429/5: The Western Pacific collective security concept**

Eisenhower’s New Look policy not only focused on nuclear deterrence, but also on collective defense to deal with limited war and subversion at regional and local levels. This called for more dependence on allies and local forces to fight the ground war, and the U.S. forces only to support with mobile strategic striking power. It was perceived that the need for a collective security arrangement in Asia was urgent, especially in light of the Indochina crisis in the spring of 1954.<sup>7</sup>

Amidst the Indochina crisis, the National Security Council (NSC) solicited views from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) on how to strengthen the U.S. and allied military position in Asia. The JCS submitted a memorandum

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Watson, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Volume V: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1953-54* (Washington, D.C. Historical Division, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1986), chapter 1; John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 152-153.

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on April 9, 1954, “United States Strategy for Developing a Position of Military Strength in the Far East” (NSC 5416). JCS recommended a comprehensive review of Asia policy in light of the rising Communist Chinese threat, and advocated, “as a long-range goal”, the “development of a regional security arrangement“, i.e., a comprehensive regional security arrangement (regional security pact) among the non-communist countries of the Far East.<sup>8</sup> It was after the fall of Dienbienphu and the settlement of the Indochina problem at the Geneva Conference (dividing Vietnam at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel) that the NSC considered the recommendation by JCS (NSC 5416) and conducted a comprehensive review of Asia policy. The final version, NSC 5429/5, titled “Current U.S. Policy toward the Far East,” was approved by the Council on December 22, 1954 and endorsed the idea for a collective regional security arrangement in Asia, that the JCS recommended. It stated:

“Encourage the conditions necessary to form *as soon as possible* and then participate in, a Western Pacific collective defense arrangement including the Philippines, Japan, the Republic of China, and the Republic of Korea, eventually linked with the Manila Pact (SEATO) and ANZUS.”<sup>9</sup>

The Eisenhower administration envisaged an overarching comprehensive collective security arrangement in the Asia-Pacific, linking the Northeast

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<sup>8</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter cited as *FRUS*), 1952-54, vol.XII, part 1, East Asia and the Pacific (Washington,D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 411-421. JCS designated the “Far East area” to include Communist China, Korea, Hong Kong, Indochina, Indonesia, the Offshore Island Chain (Japan, Ryukyus, Formosa, Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand), Malaya, Thailand, and Burma. *FRUS* 1952-54, XII, part.1, *op.cit.*, 412.

<sup>9</sup> *FRUS* 1952-54, XII, pt.1, 1062-1072 (emphasis added).

Asian/North Pacific allies with Southeast Asia (SEATO) and the ANZUS allies in the Southwest Pacific.

### **Ambivalence Within**

Thus in 1954, formation of a “Western Pacific collective defense arrangement” among the U.S., Japan, ROC, ROK, and the Philippines, “*as soon as possible*” became a policy goal. It was a rather difficult goal to realize, however, since there was never a firm consensus on how to pursue the goal.

As evidenced in the JCS memorandum (NSC 5416), the idea was supported strongly by JCS Chairman Arthur Radford and other Asia-firsters in the military, such as General James Van Fleet (formerly Commander of the Eighth Army in Korea during the Korean War).<sup>10</sup> Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and the State Department also supported it. Dulles, dubbed “Pactomania,” was an advocate of establishing a collective security network worldwide to counter the Communist threat. But there was ambivalence in the Far Eastern Bureau and Northeast Asia Office, and the Asia-hands called for caution. The difficulties of actually realizing such a goal were voiced, and the feasibility as well as the desirability of creating such a comprehensive collective security arrangement was questioned.

The original State draft of July 30 read, “Encourage these countries (Republic of China, Japan, Republic of Korea and Philippines) to consult with one another and with us with respect to the formation of a Western Pacific collective defense arrangement to parallel and perhaps eventually

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<sup>10</sup> Sakata, *op.cit.*, 65, 70.

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be linked with the Southeast Asia defense arrangement.”<sup>11</sup> On August 3, this was revised by the NSC Planning Board to, “Encourage the formation and be prepared to participate in a Western Pacific collective defense arrangement, including the Philippines, Japan, the Republic of China, and the Republic of Korea, eventually linked with the Southeast Asia security treaty and ANZUS,”--- to which Robert McClurkin, Acting Director of Office of Northeastern Affairs sarcastically commented in a memorandum to Ambassador John M. Allison (in Tokyo), “[a]s though this [the July 30 State draft] was not unrealistic enough.”<sup>12</sup> This was adopted in the first draft, NSC 5429 (August 4), which stated, “Encourage [*the conditions which will make possible*](sic) the formation of, and be prepared to participate in, a Western Pacific collective defense arrangement ....” and was maintained in NSC 5429/2 (August 20) with the brackets deleted.<sup>13</sup> To McClurkin, the language adopted in NSC 5429/2 represented “the final, more realistic policy” and “a considerable victory for us at NA [Office of Northeast Asian Affairs],” reflecting the more moderate views of the State Department.<sup>14</sup>

In light of NSC 5429 deliberations, Secretary Dulles made a public comment alluding to the Western Pacific collective security idea and invited speculation over U.S. intentions in Asia. At a news conference on August 3, Dulles acknowledged a news report that the U.S. government was considering a security pact linking the United States, Japan, South

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<sup>11</sup> The Acting Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (McClurkin) to the Ambassador in Japan (Allison), Washington, September 16, 1954, *FRUS* 1952-54, XII, pt.1, 911-912.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *FRUS* 1952-54, XII, pt.1, 699, 773 (emphasis added).

<sup>14</sup> McClurkin to Allison, September 16, 1954, *FRUS* 1952-54, XII, pt.1, 912.

Korea and Nationalist China, but that no decision was made, and was only under preliminary stage of investigation.<sup>15</sup> Ambassador Allison in Tokyo pointed out that “there is practically no possibility that Japan at present would consider joining any collective security organization” and asked for clarification as to the status of the idea.<sup>16</sup> Dulles explained to Allison that he did not have any present plans for promoting a security pact including Japan, ROK, Formosa and U.S., and perhaps Philippines, though he regarded it as “an ultimate possibility.” But at the moment, the “important business is to create in the area a sense of interdependence.” Thus, he explained that “[i]t is because of this aspect of the matter that I did not want to give a totally negative reply to the question which I got at my press conference.”<sup>17</sup>

In response to Secretary Dulles’s August 3 news conference, the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs (FE) produced a memorandum, titled “Western Pacific pact,” and warned that such speculation caused by Dulles’s comments is not healthy, and advocated that the State Department should make a decision on how to approach this topic. The FE memorandum outlined points to consider on a “possible Western Pacific Pact”. The Western Pacific collective security pact may be a five-power military pact, including Japan, ROK, ROC and U.S. The Philippines, with the possibility of extending the pact in the future, to Australia, New Zealand, and “even Indonesia”, and would “parallel and perhaps be linked with the Southeast Asian pact”(under negotiation). The Pact would be modeled on the

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<sup>15</sup> “New Asian Line-up Studied by Dulles,” *The New York Times*, August 4, 1954.

<sup>16</sup> The Ambassador in Japan to the Department of State, Tokyo, August 4 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, XII, pt.1, 694-695.

<sup>17</sup> The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Japan, August 5, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, XII, pt.1, 711-712.

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Southeast Asian pact, and present security treaties with ROK, Japan and the Philippines should be “superceded” by the new collective security treaty.<sup>18</sup>

FE went on to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of such a pact. The advantages were for example: satisfying ROK and ROC in including them in a regional security pact with the U.S. without requiring entry into the Southeast Asia treaty; emphasize completeness in the line against Communist aggression, emphasize community of purpose and interest, enhance joint planning for defense, habituate the signatories to act in concert on military matters, deter Chinese Communists from taking Formosa. But the disadvantages would be that it may encourage the ROK to attack North Korea, involve U.S. formally in war between Chinese Nationalists and Communists, cause concern among Western European allies and Asian neutrals of U.S. “rigid and bellicose” stance, stimulate Chinese Communists to break out of “encirclement” and foster Locarno-type “non-aggression pacts” among Communist-countries in Asia, create a cleavage between neutrals and anti-Communists in non-military organizations.<sup>19</sup>

The FE memorandum also emphasized that “there is “virtually no possibility” of realizing such a pact “at present”, because there would not be adequate support in Asia. The ROC would agree, but the Philippines, ROK would be unenthusiastic because of Japan. ROK’s “violent feelings” toward Japan would “completely rule out” the possibility of such a pact. Japan also would not be ready to take part, because they are “unprepared

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<sup>18</sup> Memorandum from Ogburn to Drumwright, August 12, 1954, in Hiroshi Masuda, ed., *Rearmament of Japan, part 2, 1953-1963* (Congressional Information Service and Maruzen Co., 1998. (microfische # 2-C-20)

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

psychologically” and “legally” due to constitutional provisions. Japan would also not seek closer relations with Nationalist China, but seek adjustment of relations with mainland China. Thus, the FE noted, just the mere action of mentioning the idea as Secretary Dulles did at the August 3 press conference caused this idea to be “very much in the air” and FE feared that discussion of this concept may actually result in realizing them, without adequately considering the consequences. Thus, it recommended that the State Department should conduct a “careful study” and “soon come to a decision [as to] whether it will encourage such speculation or put an end to it.”<sup>20</sup>

McClurkin echoed this cautious view, and advised Ambassador Allison that the regional collective security pact was still unrealistic, and wrought with difficulties. Even the language in NSC 5429/2, he noted should be “interpreted with moderation.” There is no question that the conditions making possible the formation of a “Northeast Asian pact (or perhaps better, a “horizontal” Western Pacific pact)“ require a “greater sense of interdependence in the area that presently exists” as Dulles noted. “Until the Japanese are themselves ready to engage in such a pact, until Japan-Korea relations are placed on a more constructive foundation and until the reparations problem is settled between Japan and the Philippines, it is impossible to foresee any real sense of interdependence or to think of a security organization in the area.” But he went on to say, “The long-term objective simply highlights the necessity of solving these immediate

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<sup>20</sup> The memorandum also noted that the ROC Foreign Minister thought it was “impractical” to put the Western Pacific countries into one single pact, but suggested instead a series of trilateral pacts linking China-Japan-U.S., China- Korea- U.S., China-Philippines-U.S. *Ibid.*

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problems,” not denying the future of a regional security organization.<sup>21</sup>

NSC 5429 deliberations continued, and the State draft (November 12) maintained the moderate wording, but in NSC 5429/3 (November 19), NSC Planning Board revised the language to, “Encourage the conditions *necessary to form as soon as possible and then participate* in, a Western Pacific collective defense arrangement...,” reflecting more assertive views such as those in JCS.<sup>22</sup> This was the language adopted in the final version, NSC 5429/5. Thus, NSC 5429/5 was a partial “defeat” for the Asia hands in the State Department. But in the implementation of the policy, State regained its initiative to modify the approach.

#### **NSC 5514: Promoting Regional Integration of South Korea**

In light of the overall Asia policy review, a Korea policy review was conducted and approved as NSC 5514 in February 1955.<sup>23</sup> The recommendation in NSC 5429/5 for a regional collective security arrangement was incorporated into NSC 5514, which suggested encouraging the conditions to form, “as soon as possible,” a “Western Pacific collective defense arrangement” including the Philippines, Japan, the Republic of China and the ROK, eventually linked with the Manila Pact and ANZUS. In light of this goal, the document emphasized the need for ROK to develop better relations with other free nations in Asia. The text read:

Encourage the development of cooperative relations, mutual respect

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<sup>21</sup> McClurkin to Allison, September 16, 1954, *FRUS* 1952-54, XII, pt.1, 912..

<sup>22</sup> *FRUS* 1952-54, XII, pt.1, 961, 976 (emphasis added).

<sup>23</sup> NSC 5514, Note by the Executive Secretary to the National Security Council on U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea, February 25, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIII, part 2, Korea (USGPO, 1993), 42-48.

and participation in multilateral activities between the ROK and the other free nations of Asia as a means of lessening the dependence of the ROK upon the US for political and moral support; endeavor to develop a community of interest between the ROK and Japan, and also with the Philippines and the Republic of China through the offer of U.S. good offices to help resolve outstanding problems and by encouragement of joint cooperation.”<sup>24</sup>

In NSC 5514, two directions can be discerned for promoting integration of Korea into the Western Pacific collective security framework. One is the Northeast Asia dimension, which includes Japan, ROK and the Republic of China. The other is ROK linkage with Southeast Asia or SEATO, including the Philippines. The following sections examine how the Eisenhower administration attempted to integrate South Korea into the Western Pacific collective security concept. It deals with the various issues that arose in U.S.-ROK relations with regard to the Western Pacific regional collective security effort. The U.S.-Japan security treaty revision of 1960<sup>25</sup> and the Taiwan Straits/offshore island crises (in 1954, 1955, 1958) were major issues, but they did not involve South Korea directly, so it will not be discussed here.

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<sup>24</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-1957, XXIII, pt. 2, 47.

<sup>25</sup> The Hatoyama Cabinet's Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu visited the United States and proposed revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in August 1955, but the U.S. declined. Negotiations for treaty revision started in 1958 with the Kishi Cabinet (Liberal Democratic Party), supported by Ambassador to Japan Douglas MacArthur II, and was concluded in June 1960. There were ideas for revising the treaty into a Western Pacific defense treaty but it was not realized. See footnote 3.

### **III. Issues in U.S.-ROK relations**

The Eisenhower administration attempted to integrate Korea into the Western Pacific collective security arrangement --but with much difficulty. Eisenhower and the Rhee administration were in disarray over what the optimal form of collective security in Asia should be, but there were some areas where interests did converge.

Overall, in terms of integrating Korea into the Western Pacific collective security, the Northeast Asia dimension with Japan did not fare well, although the ROK continued to develop ties with Nationalist China since establishing diplomatic relations in January 1949. Some progress was made, however, in Southeast Asia.

#### **Uneasy Relations between ROK and Japan**

Japan-ROK cooperation was an essential element in the development of a Western Pacific collective security arrangement. But as of 1954, Japan and ROK had not established formal diplomatic relations, and security cooperation was still beyond the horizon. Through the good offices of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), Japan and ROK began normalization talks in 1951, but talks were suspended in 1953.<sup>26</sup> Taking this situation into account, NSC 5514 recommended that the U.S. should, if necessary, provide “good offices to resolve outstanding problems” between

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<sup>26</sup> By 1953, normalization talks were deadlocked over contentious issues, such as fisheries, legal status of Korean residents in Japan, property claims and compensation. In the third round of talks in October 1953, the Japanese chief delegate Kanichiro Kubota made a statement which legitimized Japanese colonial rule over Korea. The statement inflamed the Koreans and the talks were suspended indefinitely. Chong-sik Lee, *Japan and Korea: The Political Dimension* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), chapter 2.

the two countries in their normalization talks.<sup>27</sup>

South Korea, led by President Syngman Rhee, however, opposed the U.S. scheme centered on Japan, and refused to be integrated. To Rhee, Japan was illegitimate as a leader of Asia, not just for historical reasons, but also for the present. Rhee criticized Japan for being too soft on communism, and often voiced these complaints to the U.S.

Besides voicing fears about the resurgence of Japanese militarism,<sup>28</sup> Rhee criticized Japan's diplomatic overtures with the Communist camp: rapprochement with the Soviet Union (1956 Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration), limited trade with Communist China, and limited contacts with North Korea. This also was a concern to the U.S. (that Japan may turn "neutral"), but the same level of anti-communist emotions was not shared between Rhee and Eisenhower (who was pursuing "peaceful coexistence" with the Soviets in the "Geneva spirit").<sup>29</sup> Thus, this period

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<sup>27</sup> A progress report on Korea policy noted "efforts to further tie the ROK into the U.S. security system through the Western Pacific security arrangement, called for in NSC 5429/2, have been started by emphasizing to the ROK the need for satisfactory working relationships between the ROK and Japan." Wary of heightened ROK criticisms of U.S. security policies and "propaganda attacks" on Japan, it recommended that the U.S., nevertheless, "should continue efforts to formalize broad security arrangements with the ROK," but also noted the difficulties, saying that "it may prove impossible, particularly with respect to arrangements involving Japan, to do so in the short range." Second Progress Report by the Operations Coordinating Board to the National Security Council on NSC 170/1, December 29, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, XV, 1953.

<sup>28</sup> See for example, the Dulles-Rhee talks in August 1953. Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Young), Seoul, August 5, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-54, XV, 1473.

<sup>29</sup> Rhee instructed diplomats in Washington and Tokyo to convey the message that "Japan is preparing to stand with the Communists against the U.S." and protest against Japanese trade relations with Russia and Communist China. Memorandum from the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (McClurkin) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), Washington, June 1, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-1957, XXIII, 108. Demonstrations held in front of the U.S. Embassy in Seoul to demand that the U.S. cease support of Japan, turned into a riot. Ambassador Yang You Chang recounted the "numerous Japanese overtures toward north Korea and other Communist countries as reason for ROK feelings" against Japan. Sebald said the U.S. is "just as interested as ROK in having Japan remain anti-Communist" but cautioned against the "dangerous" demonstrations. Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Korea, June 13, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIII, 113.

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was wrought with frictions over Japan-Korea relations, and the Eisenhower administration chose to take a modest role and patiently make the effort to improve relations between the two allies.

The Eisenhower administration closely followed Japan-ROK negotiations, and prodded the two countries to resume talks. Despite repeated attempts by the U.S., the talks did not resume until April 1958, after Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi withdrew the Kubota statement in late 1957, in exchange for the release of Japanese fishermen detained in Korea. The fourth round, however, stalled again, due to Kishi's decision in March 1959 to repatriate Korean residents in Japan to North Korea on "humanitarian" grounds through the International Red Cross. Soon domestic politics in both Japan and Korea overtook diplomacy. In April 1960, after the "Student Revolution," Rhee resigned after twelve years in power and fled to Hawaii. Kishi resigned after the new U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in the Diet was passed in June 1960. Normalization talks resumed in 1960, between the two new administrations in Japan and Korea. The U.S. had some hopes for the new Chang Myon regime of the Korean Democratic Party, since it was more pragmatic than Rhee and was interested in promoting Japan-Korea talks primarily for economic reasons.<sup>30</sup> The new Ikeda Cabinet (LDP) was also interested in promoting the talks, but the Chang government was weak domestically, and soon fell to the military

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<sup>30</sup> Swenson-Wright, *op.cit.*, 308, footnote 94. Ambassador to Korea Walter P. McConaughy, noted that he was "particularly encouraged" by Foreign Minister Ho Jung's remarks regarding the settlement of outstanding problems in ROK-Japan relations" and believed that "a real opportunity now presented [itself] for making substantial progress." Ambassador MacArthur in Tokyo also recommended that the U.S. should take advantage of the new government in Korea to promote better relations between ROK and Japan. Telegram from Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, Seoul, April 28, 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, volume XVIII: Japan, Korea (USGPO, 1994), 650, footnote 3.

coup led by Park Chung-hee in May 1961.

## NEATO ?

Despite the frictions, ideas for a NEATO (Northeast Asia Treaty Organization)-type of organization---a formal grouping of U.S. with Northeast Asian allies, Japan, South Korea, Republic of China-- were aired. But the Eisenhower administration understood the difficulties of such a pact. Differences over Japan's role, coupled with Japan's reluctance to enter into such pacts, and the lack of formal diplomatic relations between Japan and Korea, inhibited its realization.

Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek supported military ties with Japan, as part of an effort to strengthen Nationalist China's position vis-a-vis Communist China<sup>31</sup>. Japan, however, was reluctant about getting entangled into collective security organizations, especially with its Northeast Asian neighbors, South Korea and Taiwan which pushed a strong anti-Communist agenda. A State Department intelligence report noted that, "Japanese conservatives are ... not willing to envisage participation in a general coalition of the anti-Communist powers in Northeast Asia. They object most vehemently to military collaboration with the Republic of Korea, at least while that government is controlled by Syngman Rhee who in a recent election campaign address described Japan as a greater menace than the Communists. ... The Japanese also regard President Rhee as a dangerous ally, capable of involving nations associated with his administration in a

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<sup>31</sup> See Chiang-Dulles talks. Memorandum of Conversation, Taipei, March 16, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-1957, Vol.III, China (USGPO,1986), 329-330.

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new war, an eventuality the Japanese would abhor.”<sup>32</sup>

Ambassador Douglas MacArthur II told Secretary Dulles his views: “Japan’s two closest allies are Korea and Taiwan. Yet, at present, a collective security arrangement with Korea seem out of the question because of Korean suspicions, and Japan itself would not wish to enter into a collective security arrangement with Taiwan for fear of being dragged into a war which might develop because of hostilities breaking out between Taiwan and Communist China.”<sup>33</sup>

It is interesting to note, however, that Rhee had suggested to Eisenhower, a tripartite pact among the United States, South Korea, and Japan.<sup>34</sup> Records show that Rhee had also discussed this with his personal adviser and American professor, Robert T. Oliver in 1954. As the Indochina crisis continued, Oliver suggested to Rhee that he seize the opportunity to improve relations with Japan, and “re-open the question of SEATO that will include both Korea and Nationalist China and perhaps with (proper safeguards) Japan.”<sup>35</sup> Rhee replied to Oliver, with a “draft letter” to the State Department. In the “draft letter”, Rhee did not deny the possibility of a tripartite pact, but only when “conditions” are met. If the “conditions” are

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<sup>32</sup> “The Recent and Prospective Foreign Relations of Japan (1956-61),” September 12, 1956, Office of Intelligence and Research (OIR) Report, No.7331, OIR files, National Archives-II, cited in Swenson-Wright, *op.cit.*, 307, footnote 94.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from the Ambassador in Japan (MacArthur) to the Secretary of State, Tokyo, May 25, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIII, Part 1, Japan (USGPO, 1991), 326.

<sup>34</sup> Eisenhower stated in a letter to Rhee: “I am very glad to be assured that you share our interest in the restoration of genuine harmony and friendship between Japan and Korea. In this connection, the suggestion you make for a tripartite treaty between Japan, Korea and the United States seems to me to be well worth further exploration. I am asking Ambassador Briggs to discuss this matter with you so that we may have a fuller explanation of your ideas about such a treaty.” Letter from President Eisenhower to President Rhee, Washington, January 31, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIII, pt. 2, 12.

<sup>35</sup> Oliver’s letter to Rhee, October 5, 1954 in Robert T. Oliver, *Syngman Rhee and American Involvement in Korea, 1942-1960: A Personal Narrative* (Seoul: Panmun Book Company, 1978), 466-467.

met, “we will try to make a three-nation pact-among United States, Japan and Korea --- against any foreign aggression, including aggression among themselves, provided that Japan and United States also want such a pact. These three nations should then make a joint declaration to the effect that they stand for the independence of all the Asiatic nations, and that they will help any nation that is attacked by any third power.”<sup>36</sup>

The “conditions” Rhee set were similar to ROK demands in the normalization talks.<sup>37</sup> It was unrealistic, however, that Japan would meet those “conditions”, thus in reality, a U.S.-Korea-Japan tripartite pact was still a pipe dream. Normalization had to be achieved before any close security cooperation could be realized.<sup>38</sup>

### **Links with SEATO: the Diplomatic Dimension**

In Southeast Asia, which became the focus of Asia policy in the post-Korean War period, the U.S. established the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) with European allies (Britain and France), ANZUS and Asian allies (Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan). Secretary Dulles led the negotiations and the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (or the

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<sup>36</sup> In this “draft letter,” Rhee lamented what he called Dulles’s plan to build up Japan, a “former aggressor in Asia,” and conveyed his mistrust toward Japan. Rhee wrote, “If Japan shows a change of heart, so that she wants to live in peaceful relations with her neighbors, the past may be forgiven and forgotten, “but to Rhee’s eyes this was not so. It is not certain that this letter was sent to State, but Oliver thought this was a reply to him. Rhee’s reply to Oliver on October 18, 1954, as a “draft letter” to State Department. *Ibid.*, 468-470.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> On January 25, 1958, ROK Foreign Minister Cho Chong-hwan supported Secretary Dulles’s proposal for closer liaison among non-communist security alliances, but said that the ROK was still reluctant to support the inclusion of Japan in a regional alliance, “not because of bilateral differences, but because ROK cannot regard Japan as anti-communist.” (Report by U.S. Ambassador to Seoul, February 1958). *JOINT WEEKA, 1948-1959, vol.7, 1957-1958* (Seoul: Yongjin-sa, 1993), 299. *JOINT WEEKA* is a collection of weekly reports from the U.S. Embassy in Seoul.

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Manila Pact) was signed on September 8, 1954, by the eight nations<sup>39</sup>.

Based on the policy objectives in NSC 5429, the U.S. explored the possibility of linking SEATO with NEATO to establish a Western Pacific collective security pact. During the Manila Pact negotiations, Dulles suggested that Japan, South Korea and Taiwan also join the Manila Treaty, and expand the Southeast Asia treaty into a Western Pacific pact, but the European and ANZUS allies, as well as the Asian allies were reluctant, and preferred that it be limited to Southeast Asia. A U.S.-U.K. joint study report in July 1954 concluded that initial membership should be limited to Southeast Asia and concerned countries, but possibilities were left open for invitations to other states that wished to accede or associate themselves with the treaty.<sup>40</sup>

In early September 1954, as the Manila Treaty was signed, crisis over the Nationalist China-controlled Quemoy-Matsu islands broke out. But SEATO membership was not expanded to include ROC, so a separate pact was signed with the Republic of China on December 2, 1954. Dulles emphasized that the U.S.-ROC mutual defense pact “will follow the general pattern of other security pacts which the US concluded in the Western Pacific” and that the it “ will forge another link in the system of collective security established by the various collective defense treaties already concluded between the US and other countries in the Pacific area.” The preamble of the treaty included reference to the goal of “development of a

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<sup>39</sup> By protocol, the treaty area extended to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam (territory south of the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel under jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam). *Department of State Bulletin*, September 20, 1954, 392-395.

<sup>40</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, XII, pt.1, 597,607, 611, 614, 633, 643. Robert McClurkin, Deputy Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs further explored the idea with UK, Australia, and New Zealand Embassy officials in Washington. See Sakata, *op.cit.*, 74-76.

more comprehensive system of regional security in the *West Pacific* area” reflecting the Western Pacific collective security concept in NSC 5429.<sup>41</sup>

After the signing of the Manila pact, SEATO progressively developed as a collective security organization. Based on Article V of the Manila Treaty, SEATO established the Council of Foreign Ministers, which met annually, and headquarters in Bangkok. By decision at the first SEATO Council meeting in February 1955, the Council of Representatives (Ambassadors of signatory states), the Military Adviser’s Group (Chief of Staff or an Area Commander of signatory states; in the case of U.S., CINCPAC) was formed. Later in March 1957, the Military Planning Office was established, and joint planning and exercises were conducted.<sup>42</sup>

The U.S. continued to seek linkages with non-SEATO members. A policy document on Southeast Asia, NSC 5612/1 (September 1956) recommended that the U.S. “[p]articipate actively in SEATO, and seek to develop both its military and non-military aspects in a manner that will convincingly demonstrate the value of SEATO as a regional association, the usefulness of which extends beyond deterrence of Communist expansion,” and “*encourage limited participation of non-Communist, non-SEATO Asian nations in certain SEATO activities.*”<sup>43</sup> At the fourth meeting of the SEATO Council in 1958, the final communiqué (March 13) read: “The Council considered that contacts between SEATO and non-member States

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<sup>41</sup> *Department of State Bulletin*, December 13, 1954, 895-899 (emphasis added).

<sup>42</sup> Les Buszynski, S.E.A.T.O.: *Failure of an Alliance Strategy* (Kent Ridge: Singapore University Press, 1983), chapters 1 and 2. Kenneth W. Condit, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Volume VI, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1955-1956* (Historical Office, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C., 1992), 221-228; Fairchild and Poole, *op.cit.*, 217-220.

<sup>43</sup> NSC 5612/1, “Statement of Policy on U.S. Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia,” September 5, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-1957, Volume XXI, East Asian Security; Cambodia; Laos (USGPO, 1990), 257 (emphasis added).

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had proved useful in many respects and directed that, as circumstances permitted, such contacts be continued and expanded in the coming years.”<sup>44</sup>

South Korea desired membership in SEATO<sup>45</sup>, but it was not realized. In the meantime, South Korea pursued its own initiatives to strengthen collective security in Asia. Even before the Korean War, South Korea, with Taiwan and the Philippines took initiative in forming a collective security pact in Asia and called for creation of a “Pacific Pact”.<sup>46</sup> In the aftermath of the Korean War, as the focus of attention shifted to Indochina, Rhee and Chiang Kai-shek strengthened efforts to establish anti-Communist organizations in Asia, and revived its proposals for a Pacific Pact. In late November 1953, Rhee visited Taipei, with Army General Choi Duk-shin to promote a Pacific defense pact. Chiang and Rhee advocated formation of an “Anti-Communist Unified Front” to be supported by the U.S..<sup>47</sup> The Chiang-Rhee collaboration expanded to include Southeast Asia. In December 1953, South Korea sent its first Southeast Asia mission, with General Choi as a leading member, and visited ROC, Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand. Since South Korea did not have diplomatic relations with Southeast Asian countries, it conducted the trip with the assistance of ROC

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<sup>44</sup> *Department of State Bulletin*, March 31, 1958, 505.

<sup>45</sup> On February 27, 1955, after the first SEATO Council meeting, ROK Foreign Minister Pyun Yung Tai, implicated that ROK was ready to join SEATO. *Hanguk Oegyo Yonpyo* [Chronology of ROK Diplomacy](Seoul: National Diet Library, 1974), 105.

<sup>46</sup> The Pacific Pact proposal of 1949 was rejected by the Truman administration. Sakata, *op.cit.*, 34-35.

<sup>47</sup> Choi Yong-ho, “Rishouban Seiken ni yoru Hankyou Gaikou no tenkai- Kankokuno Tounan Ajia gaikou no hajimari [Syngman Rhee’s Anti-Communist Diplomacy: Beginnings of South Korea’s Southeast Asia Diplomacy], *Ajia Keizai* [Tokyo: Ajia Keizai Kenkyujo, ed.] 32: 5 (May 1995), 58-59; Matsumoto Haruka, “Higashi Ajia ‘Zenshou Kokka’ niyoru Shudan Annzen Hoshou Taisei Kousou to Amerika no Taiou: ‘Taiheiyou Doumei’ to ‘Ajia Minzoku Hankyou Renmei’ wo Chusin-ni [“Pacific Pact’ and ‘the Asian People Anti-Communist League’: American Reactions to the Proposals of the Two Security Pacts by ‘Outpost Countries’ in East Asia],” *Ajia Taiheiyou Kenkyu* [Tokyo: University of Tokyo] 5 (2005), 140-141.

and U.S. embassies.<sup>48</sup>

But soon the initiative for collective security in Asia shifted to the United States. In spring of 1954, the U.S. began negotiations for SEATO, in which the Philippines and Thailand participated. South Korea, in the meantime, continued diplomacy to create its own version of Asian collective security grouping which eventually came to be known as “The Asian People’s Anti-Communist League” (hereafter, APACL).<sup>49</sup>

APACL was inherently weak because most of the representatives were of “non-official” status. Of the eight countries and areas that participated, only the divided countries ---South Korea, Nationalist China and South Vietnam--- sent government officials. The Philippines and Thailand avoided official contacts, since they focused on SEATO. Macao/Hong Kong and the Ryukyus were not independent countries but administrative areas. APACL also excluded the Japanese government, due to ROK opposition.

The U.S. was skeptical of the ROK-led initiative, and declined to participate. One reason was that it did not involve Japan. In February 1954, when General John E. Hull, Commander-in-Chief, Far East (CINCFE) visited Korea, Rhee requested U.S. participation, but Hull replied that unless Japan was included in these organizations, the U.S. government will not provide support, and instead called for resumption of Japan-ROK normalization talks.<sup>50</sup> Japanese membership was also a contentious issue between Rhee and Chiang. Chiang believed that Japan should be included in Asian collective security organizations, but Rhee adamantly opposed. Japanese membership continued to be an issue

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<sup>48</sup> South Korea sent a second mission to Southeast Asia in February-March 1954, which included visits to ROC, Indonesia, Burma, Thailand. Choi, *op.cit.*, Matsumoto, *op.cit.*

<sup>49</sup> The first APACL meeting was held in Chinhae, Korea in June 1954. Choi, *op.cit.*, 60-61, Matsumoto, *op.cit.*, 144-148.

<sup>50</sup> *Tong-a Ilbo* (Seoul), February 8, 1954, cited in Matsumoto, *op.cit.*, 146.

between Seoul and Taipei.<sup>51</sup>

American observers participated in APACL meetings. One observer at the fifth annual conference in June 1959, reported as follows: “the conference was successful within limits set by [the] obvious fact [that] APACL [is] largely [a] paper organization which lacks the organizational machinery necessary [to] play a really effective role. Delegations [are] uneven in quality, with Australians, Turks, Chinese and Koreans quite outstanding but others comprising obvious non-entities who probably have little support.”<sup>52</sup> As one biographer of Syngman Rhee noted: “an alliance of South Korea, Formosa, and Japan would have represented a very real military potential backed up by the heavy industry of Japan. But Rhee’s attitude towards Japan precluded Tokyo’s participating in any grouping that included South Korea; in fact, it soon became apparent that a major function of the league [APACL], in Rhee’s view, was to alert his fellow Asians against the menace of resurgent Japan.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Links with SEATO: the Military Dimension**

Despite the discord on the diplomatic front, U.S. and ROK interests began to converge on the military front. Military contacts between ROK and SEATO were promoted to strengthen military capabilities to deal with contingencies in Southeast Asia.

By 1957, SEATO had developed to a point where the Military Planning

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<sup>51</sup> In September 1957, an editorial in the *Korean Republic* (government-supported newspaper) noted Japanese membership as one of the problems to be solved at the Taipei Conference, but criticized that Japan has “no immediate intension of opposing Communism.” *JOINT WEEKA*, vol.7, *op.cit.*, 218.

<sup>52</sup> *JOINT WEEKA*, vol.8, 1959, *op.cit.*, 162.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Allen, *Korea’s Syngman Rhee: An Unauthorized Portrait* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1960), 188. The conference was used as a forum to criticize Japanese policies. For example, the fifth APACL conference called for Japan to “to desist from negotiating with DPRK and resume talks with ROK” (June 10, 1959), *JOINT WEEKA*, vol.8, 1959 *op.cit.*, 162.

Office was established to promote joint planning and exercises. The U.S. tried to avoid earmarking forces for SEATO, since it had commitments elsewhere, but by 1958-59, upon Asian and Australian insistence, designated some of its forces as task forces for SEATO, while avoiding the establishment of a unified command like NATO.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, the U.S. began to promote military exchanges with non-SEATO members. Secretary Dulles proposed the following in Manila at the Fourth SEATO Council of Ministers meeting in March 1958, both of which were adopted: acceptance of a NATO proposal for contact with other defense organizations, and the “*authority to have contacts at the military personnel level with non-pact countries of the area, such as South Korea and Formosa.*”<sup>55</sup>

Why South Korea and Formosa (Nationalist China)? As reflected in the JCS memorandum (NSC 5416) of August 1954, the JCS Chairman Radford and others strongly supported developing an Asian regional defense force: one in which local forces would provide ground forces, and the U.S. would support with strategic mobile striking power.<sup>56</sup> The JCS had counted on a rearmed Japan and its forces to contribute to the collective defense of the Far East, but Japan resisted.<sup>57</sup> Nationalist China and South Korean forces

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<sup>54</sup> Condit, *op.cit.*, 221-228; Fairchild and Poole, *op.cit.*, 218-219; Buszynski, *op.cit.*, 49-50.

<sup>55</sup> Letter from the Secretary of State to the President, Manila, March, 11, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, XVI, East Asia-Pacific Region; Cambodia; Laos (USGPO, 1992), 6 (emphasis added).

<sup>56</sup> On NSC 5416, see footnote 8, Sakata, *op.cit.*, 66-69. General James Van Fleet was also a strong advocate of a Asian regional defense force. *Ibid.*, 70-71.

<sup>57</sup> NSC 6008/1, “United States Policy toward Japan” (June 11, 1960) read: “The present mission of the Japanese forces, other than that of supporting the police in the maintenance of internal security, is to participate in the defense of the Japan area. Any expansion of this mission to use those forces outside the Japan area is barred by Article 9 of the Constitution which, as it is presently interpreted, limits the deployment of Japanese military forces to the self-defense of Japan.” Japan’s contribution to “Free World strength will be principally as an economic force and as a moderating influence on the Afro-Asian area. Unless there is significant change in Japanese thinking on military matters, Japan is not likely to enter regional security arrangements, but the availability of logistic facilities and military bases to the United States will contribute significantly to Free World military strength in the Pacific.” *FRUS*, 1958-60, XVIII, 340, 343.

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were also candidates. NSC 5416 recommended that assistance and support be provided to the forces of South Korea and Nationalist China not only for internal security, but also as “*prospective contributors to the community defense effort in the Far East.*”<sup>58</sup> Since Japan could not contribute forces to regional defense, the value of the ROC and ROK forces increased. NSC 5723, the policy statement on Nationalist China, explicitly stated that the U.S. “continue military assistance and direct forces support for the GRC armed forces” to enable them “to contribute to collective non-Communist strength in the Far East.”<sup>59</sup> Policy on the ROK forces was not as explicit as the ROC forces on roles beyond territorial defense, since priority was placed on deterring and defending against a North Korean attack, while alleviating the military burden on its weak economy.<sup>60</sup> Holding the line in Korea was the primary role for ROK forces, but a regional military role was implicit in the policy. NSC 5907 noted as a current U.S. policy objective, to assist ROK to make a “substantial contribution to Free World strength in the Pacific area” by adding a new role to the ROK forces: Maintain ROK forces capable of, not only deterring and resisting aggression by North Korea and Communist China in Korea (with the U.S. forces), but also “*exercising the degree of power and range of capabilities sufficient to demonstrate throughout Asia the continuing determination of the Republic of Korea to oppose Communist aggression.*”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Memorandum by Wilson to Lay, April 10, 1954, *FRUS* 1952-54, XII, pt.1, 419 (emphasis added). See also, Lee (1996), *op.cit.*, 88-89.

<sup>59</sup> NSC 5723, U.S. Policy Toward Taiwan and the Government of the Republic of China, October 4, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-1957, Vol.III, China (USGPO, 1986),620-622. Fairchild and Poole, *op.cit.*, 208.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-201.

<sup>61</sup> NSC 5907, Statement of U.S. Policy toward Korea, July 1, 1959, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, XVIII, 573 (emphasis added).

Military personnel exchanges between ROK and Southeast Asia were promoted since 1954, after the Korean War. The U.S. saw the ROK forces as a role model for the Southeast Asian countries. In a memorandum to General Maxwell Taylor (CINCFE/CINCUNC) on ROK forces, Dulles emphasized: “As the strongest Allied military force in the Far East, although by necessity confined to Korea, the ROK Army’s existence is a powerful, if not determining, factor in shaping Korean relations with Far Eastern countries. It appears also as a goal towards which the other free Asian countries, especially in Southeast Asia, aspire, as we wish them to do. The ROK military establishment is factor of great import in the Far East and, as the largest and most effective standing army in the area on our side, will continue to be so for some time.”<sup>62</sup> The U.S., discussed, with the French, about adapting training methods for the ROK forces, regarded as a successful case for war-fighting, to strengthen the Indochina/Vietnamese forces.<sup>63</sup> Military observation missions between ROK and Vietnam were exchanged since 1954,<sup>64</sup> and the ROK established diplomatic relations with the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) headed by Ngo Dinh Diem in October 1955. The two countries continued military exchanges with the

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<sup>62</sup> Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, Seoul, May 30, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-1957, XXIII, 104.

<sup>63</sup> Memorandum of U.S.-French Talks at Quai d’Orsay, April 22, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, XIII, part 1, Indochina (USGPO, 1982), 484; Matsuoka Kan, “1950 nendai Amerika no Doumei Saihen Senryaku: Togo no Mosaku (America’s Alliance Realignment Strategy in the 1950’s: Search for Integration),” *Kokusai Seiji* (Tokyo: Kokusai Seiji Gakkai, ed.) (January 1994), 85; Matsumoto, *op.cit.*, 149

<sup>64</sup> In his memoirs, ROK General Paik Sun Yup noted that the U.S. military tried to apply the ROK force build-up program to Southeast Asia. Vietnamese Army officers, including Colonel Nguyen Van Thu who later became President also visited ROK. General Paik visited the Vietnam Army Officers Academy in 1954. Paik Sun Yup, *Wakaki Shougun no Chousen Sensou* [The Young General’s Korean War] (Tokyo: Soushisha, 2000), 423. Matsumoto, *op.cit.*

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support of the U.S.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to military exchanges, ROK troop deployments to Indochina and the broader Southeast Asian region were considered by the Eisenhower administration. ROK offers to send troops to Indochina were made in January-February and June-July 1954, in light of the Dienbienphu crisis.<sup>66</sup> Admiral Radford favored deployment, but others including the President were cautious, and thus the proposal was declined, but the ROK troop option was kept open for future contingencies.<sup>67</sup> Further offers were made in February 1958, to send troops to Indonesia to aid the anti-government non-communist guerillas in Sumatra, and to Laos in May 1959 to help the Laos government resist the Pathet Laos communist insurgency, both of which were declined at the time.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> President Ngo Dinh Diem sent several military delegations to Seoul. In return, the ROK sent a twenty-member Tae Kwon Do team (headed by MG. Choi Hong Hee) to visit eight cities in Vietnam during March 4-15, 1959. Kyudok Hong, *Unequal Partners: ROK-US Relations During the Vietnam War* (PhD. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1991), 95. In 1958, ROK Chief-of-Staff Paik Sun Yup visited South Vietnamese Army upon invitation from the South Vietnam Defense Minister. This was realized through the good offices of General Samuel T. Williams, Chief of U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group in Republic of Vietnam. Matsumoto, *op.cit.*, 150, footnote 88. ROK Ambassador to Vietnam, General Choi Duk Shin also recommended ROK Navy and Air Force visits to Southeast Asia, in light of SEATO's increasing strategic importance to ROK. Lee (1996), *op.cit.*, 103, footnote 44.

<sup>66</sup> ROK offered a range of one to three divisions for deployment to Laos. See Sakata, *op.cit.*, 82-86.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> The Sumatra insurgency was put down by President Sukarno in April-May 1958, and Sukarno continued his leftward leaning policy line until the military coup in 1965. Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson lamented that the insurgency forces were so weak, that if ROK forces were deployed, only Korean soldiers would be in combat. The Indonesian newspapers, at the time, ran reports, that Rhee was planning to send "volunteer forces" to help the insurgency, and ROK Ambassador to Vietnam, Choi Duk-shin, was secretly meeting insurgency leaders in Singapore. Choi did not deny this news in his report to Rhee. In the Laos crisis, Rhee, in May 1959, directed Choi to contact the Laos government to inform them that ROK is ready to send "volunteer forces", and through the Korean Embassy in U.S., requested the U.S. government's approval of deploying two divisions to Laos. But JCS declined the offer stating that there was concern that it would weaken Korea's defense posture. Lee (1996), *op.cit.*, 97-98.; Fairchild and Poole, *op.cit.*, 221-222. In a conversation with the UK Prime Minister, Dulles acknowledged ROC and ROK interests in contributing forces to the Indonesia, but was inclined to keep the matter "among only Anglo-Saxon countries." Memorandum of Conversation, Department of State, Washington, June 9, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, XVI, 41.

## IV. Conclusion

The Western Pacific collective security idea was too ambitious for Asia in the 1950's, as the Eisenhower Administration soon realized. By the end of 1959, the Administration came to terms with the reality: discord among Asia-Pacific allies and reluctance of the European allies (British and French in Southeast Asia) prevented the establishment of a comprehensive pact. Asia-hands in the State Department focused on the political reality, and advised caution to the Europeanists such as Dulles and to the Asia-firsters in the military. Eventually the language regarding Western Pacific collective security was modified. The term "comprehensive collective security arrangement" was deleted from NSC 5913 (September 1959), the policy statement on the Far East, and read:

"Promote and strengthen our multilateral (SEATO, ANZUS) and bilateral (with Korea, GRC[Republic of China], Japan and the Philippines) defense arrangements in the West Pacific and develop wider understanding of common purposes among all our allies and other friends in the Far East."<sup>69</sup>

Accordingly, Korea policy was modified. NSC 5907(July 1959) included the Western Pacific collective security idea but the goal to pursue it "as soon as possible" was deleted.<sup>70</sup> By 1960, in NSC 6018, reference to the

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<sup>69</sup> NSC 5913, "Statement of U.S. Policy in the Far East," September 25, 1959, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, XVI, 139.

<sup>70</sup> Note by the Executive Secretary (Lay) to the NSC on U.S. Policy Toward Korea (NSC 5907), July 1, 1959, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, XVIII, 571.

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idea was completely deleted.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, the Western Pacific collective security idea gave way to a more modest goal of strengthening the existing alliances in the Asia-Pacific. The alternative course, however, was also wrought with many difficulties, as examined in the context of U.S.-Korea relations.

In Northeast Asia, Japan-ROK relations was the key, but the bilateral relationship at the time was going through the most contentious period. The Eisenhower administration tried to promote normalization talks between the two allies, but South Korea under Rhee resisted being integrated into the U.S. scheme centered on Japan. U.S. and ROK views on Japan were never reconciled by the end of the Eisenhower's term. Thus neither a NEATO nor a trilateral pact among the three allies was possible.

In Southeast Asia, there was also discord on the diplomatic front. The U.S. failed to link the Northeast Asian allies to SEATO, due to opposition from SEATO members. South Korea, in the meantime, took the initiative, with Nationalist China, to create its own version of an anti-Communist Asia collective security pact, and attempted to incorporate the U.S. into its scheme, without success. In response to the Indochina crisis, Rhee solicited participation from ROC and Southeast Asian countries and established the "Asian People's Anti-Communist League" in June 1954, but it was intrinsically weak. ROK could not obtain full cooperation from Southeast Asian countries (namely Philippines and Thailand), and the exclusion of Japan was another flaw. Not only the U.S. but also Chiang Kai-shek did not agree with Rhee on the exclusion of Japan in Asian pacts. Eventually, the

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<sup>71</sup> Note by the Executive Secretary (Lay) to the NSC on U.S. Policy Toward Korea (NSC 6018), November 28, 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, XVIII, 699-707.

focus shifted to the U.S.-led SEATO.

Thus, the Eisenhower years were one of discord for the U.S.-ROK alliance in the Asia-Pacific, but there was one area where some progress was made: the military front in Southeast Asia. In the late 1950's, military exchanges between ROK and Vietnam were promoted, in the context of SEATO – non-SEATO allied cooperation. The U.S. saw the ROK forces as a model for Southeast Asian countries, especially South Vietnam, another divided country. The ROK government even offered troops to Indochina and other areas as part of the collective defense effort. This was welcomed especially by the Asia-firsters in the JCS, and was considered as an option, though not in the 1950's, but for the future.

Eventually, U.S.-ROK interests converged further in the 1960's, with the emergence of a new generation of leadership in the ROK. During the Park Chung-hee regime, Japan-Korea normalization was realized in 1965, and in the same year, the President Lyndon B. Johnson requested deployment of ROK combat troops to Vietnam. SEATO was in decline after its failure to deal effectively with the Laos crisis in 1959-60, and was essentially replaced by a “quasi-alliance” formed by troop contributing members of SEATO (U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand) with non-SEATO members, South Korea and South Vietnam.<sup>72</sup> On Philippine and South Korean initiative, this time with U.S. support, the allies gathered in Manila in October 1966, to hold the Seven-nation Conference, or the Manila Conference. This short-lived Asia-Pacific allied cooperation began and ended with the Vietnam War. But it was the first time the U.S.-ROK alliance functioned as an Asia-Pacific alliance, and its legacies need to be examined in future studies.

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<sup>72</sup> Buszynski, *op.cit.*, 135-140.