

SOME PROPOSED SOLUTIONS AND/OR ALTERNATIVES
TO THE PROBLEM OF KOREAN UNIFICATION:
A POLITICAL-GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

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KOREA IS A DIVIDED COUNTRY, AND TO THE KOREAN PEOPLE THIS MUST seem like a paradoxical nightmare. Surely once having awakened from their slumber the unreality of the dream will dissipate, and tranquility will be restored to the mind. But the cloak of reality which overshadows the peninsula is one of political separation. The "bamboo curtain" has been drawn shut across the bosom of the peninsula, completely disregarding the cries of the majority of the inhabitants of this ancient land. Does this drawn curtain signal the end of all hope for the reunification of Korea, or is the last act of the Korean drama yet to be unfolded?

For many centuries Korea has undergone political struggle as a result of foreign occupation. Near the end of World War II the Koreans began to think once again that their country could regain its independence. In all sincerity the United States tried vainly within the powers of its influence to bring about a united Korea. The biggest mistake the United States made in Korea was to under-estimate the intentions of the Communists.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a political-geographical analysis of the problem of a politically divided Korea, through discussion of some of the possible alternatives and/or solutions that could produce a permutation in the *status quo* presently existing in Korea. The mainsprings of any peaceful solution of the Korean question will undoubtedly be unwound very slowly if such is at all possible. On the other hand some unforeseen event could produce a break in the delicately balanced and uneasy truce along the Demilitarized Zone or in the surrounding waters off Korea, which could lead to a renewal of hostilities.

The proposals presented in this paper represent this writer's current ideas and thinking pertaining to the problem at hand, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions and views of any particular government or organization. Moreover, it is the author's intention that this paper add new dimensions to the problem of Korea, from a view somewhat differently than that advanced by many writers and interpreters on the subject.

Historians, political scientists, statesmen, etc., whenever speculating and writing about events in Korea, have customarily analyzed that country's political developments largely in terms of varying policies adopted by different governments in their respective relationships with the peninsula. How-

ever dramatic the expressions of those analysts have been in observing and publicizing Korea's problems, there continues to remain a key role for the political geographer to play in the difficult task of analyzing and setting the main problems of Korea in their proper political-geographic perspective.¹ For example, Williston calls attention to the fact that American historians and writers have relegated Korea to such an unimportant role in Far Eastern affairs, ". . . that the reader of the record finishes it with the uneasy feeling that Korea was always incidental to seemingly greater concerns and commitments in the Far East."² Several other reliable sources point to somewhat similar apathy on the part of Americans in dealing with the problems of Korea. Lattimore, for instance, notes that in the United States a communication gap exists in the coordination of compartmental research and studies dealing with Asian countries. Moreover, studies of many Asian countries, such as Korea, Burma, Afghanistan, etc. have been relatively neglected and inadequately developed.³ Shannon McCune, one of the redundant authorities on Korea today, similarly concurs with these interpretations.⁴ Accordingly, from the point of view of this political geographer, the following proposed solutions and/or alternatives are examined in the context of Korea's present political situation.

First, the Military Armistice Commission in Korea represents a possible route toward *dénouement* of the Korean dilemma. While it functions as a military arrangement, the Armistice Commission is, nevertheless, a negotiating agency which has resolved certain issues and problems relating to easing tensions in Korea. A significant evidence of its actions was its recent role in negotiations involving the "Pueblo Incident", and eventually serving as the medium through which this incident was resolved. On other occasions the Armistice Commission has been instrumental in negotiating the release of captured or detained military personnel, taken into custody in the vicinity of the Demilitarized Zone. In one further illustration, negotiations at Panmunjom resulted in the release of the passengers and crew of a commercial airliner hijacked to North Korea.

¹ Joseph B. Smith, "The Koreans and Their Living Space: An Attempted Analysis in Terms of Political Geography," *Korean Review*, Vol. II (September, 1949), p. 45.

² Frank G. Williston, "Reflections on American-Korean Relations," *Korean Review*, Vol. I (March, 1948), pp. 4-5.

³ Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), pp. xlix-1.

⁴ McCune notes that prior to 1945, Korea was an area of inconsequence to most political observers in the United States of America. Few Americans were concerned with Korea's problems or had any appreciation or understanding of the complex character of the peninsula's geography. Only one official within the U.S. State Department was devoting his entire talent and skills as an advisor and authority on Korea's problems. Shannon McCune, *Korea: Land of the Broken Calm* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1966), pp.198-201.

Despite its success on various occasions, the Armistice Commission failed in its important role of preventing an armament buildup in Korea, incurring the danger of a renewed war. Under the provisions of Paragraph 13d of the Armistice Agreement the Armistice Commission was obligated to supervise a relative military balance between North and South Korea.⁵ To maintain this balance, Neutral Nations Inspection Teams were dispatched to the Korean ports of entry to inspect all arrivals and departures of combat material and military personnel. The Communists, however, with the helpful collaboration of the Czech-Pole Inspection Teams, used the Armistice Agreement as a cloak for covering up their violations and modernizing their armed forces. Subsequently, the UN Command announced on June 21, 1957 at the Military Armistice Commission meeting, that it was absolving itself of its obligations under Paragraph 13d, and was taking appropriate steps to restore the military balance.⁶ Today, the governments of both North and South Korea maintain sizeable armies, which represent a considerable drain to their economies. Even if the Armistice Commission should attempt to maintain a relative military balance between the two regions, such an effort would be fruitless. According to Gulick, attempts to achieve regional power balances are rather futile:

“. . . where there could once have been an independent existence for such sub-systems (the Baltic powers in the early 18th century, for example), today each would be hard-put to pretend its policies were unrelated to the over-riding competition of the superpowers. Regional frameworks have ceased to have a separate identity or any real meaning by themselves. One cannot reasonably consider the balance between North and South Korea as unrelated to the central struggle of the US and the USSR.”⁷

The Armistice Commission, nevertheless, continues to remain as an opening toward a peaceful settlement of the Korea question. It is the only agency in existence through which negotiations of a high level are continually being carried on with representatives of Communist North Korea and, perhaps more important, although indirectly, with representatives of the Red Chinese regime.⁸ North Korea's puppet government has its strings pulled by Peking and Moscow (though presently leaning towards the latter), and some circumstance or event could occur in the future whereby productive negotiation for reunification might be possible at the Armistice table. Indeed at one of the Armistice Commission meetings which this writer attended in 1956, such a happening did occur. Although the Communist proposal for reunification was unilaterally drawn up to favor only their side, and was re-

⁵ Headquarters, United Nations Command (Base Camp, Korea), *Text of Agreement, Armistice Agreement*, Vol. I, July 27, 1953, pp. 6-7. (Mimeographed).

⁶ *Minutes, Seventy-Fifth Meeting of the Military Armistice Commission* (Panmunjom, Korea: 21 June 1957), pp. 3, 7-8.

⁷ Edward L. Gulick, "Our Balance of Power System in Perspective," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. XIV, No. 1, (1960), p. 13.

⁸ On occasion meetings conducted in secrecy have been held between U.S. and

jected by the UN Command as propaganda, the point is that the Armistice table could be a site for future negotiations on such a matter.

Shortly after World War II it was believed by many that the UN could resolve the Korean question. A UN Temporary Commission was sent to Korea to survey the situation, and to supervise general elections for the reunification of that country. The Commission was futile in its efforts, however, since the Communists refused to cooperate with it or even to allow it to enter North Korea. However, there is a likelihood that Red China might become a UN member at some future date,⁹ and some unforeseen circumstance might then arise whereby the Communists would be amenable to working through that organization for a reunited Korea. No doubt the Communists would like to see American troops withdrawn from Korea, thus removing a potential threat of retaliatory power from their doorstep.¹⁰ In return for the withdrawal of American troops, the Communists might be willing to accept two alternatives, either of which could be implemented through a world organization such as the UN. These two alternatives are: 1) a buffer status for all of Korea and, 2) a semi-independent status for Korea under a world organization such as the UN.

Neither status, however, would exclude Korea from the influence of the great powers. Located between powerful neighbors such as Japan, China, and Russia, the geographical position of the peninsula is, indeed, an unfortunate one. Perhaps no other country has been more influenced by its geographic location than that of Korea. Because of its location, Korea has served as a bridge between Japan and the Asian mainland for many centuries.¹¹ This bridge has often been used for aggressive purposes, but over the years

Red Chinese representatives in Warsaw.

⁹ Neither Red China nor North Korea belong to the UN, as both have been labeled aggressors by that organization.

¹⁰ Korea is of interest to Communist China and Soviet Russia for one rather obvious reason, the propinquity of its relationship as a neighboring country. When the peninsula was threatened with being overrun by UN and ROK forces, the Chinese responded with the sending of "volunteers" to Korea, which was hardly a surprise to many Korean observers, since the move was a natural proclivity on the part of Red China to protect its own frontiers and national interests. Chinese intervention, according to Hartmann, was triggered for two main reasons: first, China feared ". . . the prospect of a United States-dominated and led anti-Communist coalition at the Yalu River gate of her house . . .", and second; China's principal industrial region, South Manchuria, might be shut off from valuable hydroelectric power furnished by Yalu River Basin dams. See F. H. Hartmann in Chapter 21, "Case Studies in Collective Security: Korea," *The Relations of Nations* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), pp. 387-388.

¹¹ Korea's location has not diminished in strategic importance, despite the passage of centuries. If anything, its location appears to be increasing in significance. The peninsula's proximity to the Soviet Union and Red China, coupled with the growth of American influence and power in the region, has brought about a renewed interest and awareness in the "Doorway to the Asian continent."

the main role of Korea was to serve as a buffer state between the great powers of the Far East.¹² Thus, it is apparent that the Korean peninsula's strategic location contributed to its historical development as a buffer state. According to McCune, ". . . Korea may serve as a significant buffer nation, but this is a role not strongly desired by the Koreans, for they have suffered from buffeting for centuries."¹³

The case of Korea is not an unusual one; historical and political geography supplies other similar illustrations of the application and consequences of buffer states. An often used example of a similar buffer situation is the region known as the "Middle Belt" of Europe. Created as a result of the Versailles Agreement, this chain of buffer states from Poland to Bulgaria found itself in an unfortunate situation in the period between the two World Wars. Concerning this buffer zone's relative weakness, Wight points out:

"It came into existence while Germany and Russia had temporarily ceased to be Great Powers, but it could not be maintained without relation to them; least of all could it be, as the Allies seem to have hoped, a wall to hem them both in. As soon as the two had resumed their strength they moved into this vacuum again, as the prelude to conflict between themselves."¹⁴

From previous discussion, the political history of buffer states warns that territorial instability is not unexpected. Against this historical and geographical background, the question is would Korea's status as a buffer or semi-independent state fit Far Eastern conditions and be politically feasible. If so, in either case, the end product must undoubtedly result in a Korea restrained in its external political relations, and one which must remain aloof of the power politics of the great powers. Undoubtedly, the Koreans would prefer other alternatives than those above.

Third, should a mainland revolution of serious magnitude ever occur in Communist China, there is the likelihood that the two Koreas would resort to armed conflict to settle their opposing ideological differences.¹⁵ In such a circumstance, North Korean forces would very likely be hard-pressed to prevent the South Korean forces from occupying the North. Red Chinese troops would probably not be in a position to intervene in behalf of North Korea, as they did once before, and the numerically larger and rather efficient South Korean army would probably be able to overcome the North

¹² Kyung Cho Chung, *Korea Tomorrow* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), pp. 4-7.

¹³ Shannon McCune, "Korea: Geographic Parallels, 1950-1960," *Journal of Geography*, Vol. LIX (May, 1960), p. 5.

¹⁴ Martin Wight, "The Balance of Power Among Western States," in Joel Larus (editor), *Comparative World Politics: Readings in Western and Premodern Non-Western International Relations* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1964), p. 116.

¹⁵ A comparable situation might prompt similar action should a large scale Sino-Soviet confrontation occur in the Far East.

Koreans.¹⁶ The South Korean army is now a sizeable military force on a world scale, numbering about 600,000 men. It is well trained, battle tested in the previous war, equipped with fairly modern weapons, and a large size. When this writer worked with the Armistice Commission in Korea during 1956 and 1957, a commonly used shibboleth of the South Korean news media was that of "march north." No doubt many South Koreans still feel this is the only way to reunite their country.

Another possibility which cannot be precluded is that the two Korean governments may eventually enter into negotiations for closer ties with one another. Such ties would most likely come in the form of closer economic or trade or some similar relationships.¹⁷ Over half of Korea's industry lies in the North, as well as most of the hydroelectric developments, and the majority of the mineral wealth. South Korea on the other hand, is a heavily populated agricultural region with the better soils. Therefore, it would be economically feasible for the two governments to enter into a trade relationship or economic union such as the Benelux. This relationship would be plausible from the standpoint of the proximity of the two regions, and would not necessitate a final political cohesion or reunification of the two areas.¹⁸ The Han River Estuary, which is contiguous to both North and South Korea, is already open to the civil shipping of both sides, in accordance with the provisions of the Armistice Agreement. This estuary might prove satisfactory for mutual exchange of goods, since both sides are afforded close contacts with each other in that vicinity.

¹⁶ South Korea's population base of approximately 30 million gives that region a greater human manpower pool upon which to draw, compared to that of North Korea which numbers around 12 million.

¹⁷ In a 1962 speech outlining the theme of North Korea's foreign and domestic policy, Kim Il-sung, Premier of North Korea, set forth his proposals for a unified Korea to be achieved through a gradual transition. One of the steps in the unification plan envisaged the initiation of economic and cultural cooperation between the two Koreas. However, Kim stipulated this step must come as an appurtenance to the withdrawal of American troops from Korea. For further elaboration on this plan, see Robert A. Scalapino (editor), "The Foreign Policy of North Korea," in *North Korea Today* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), pp. 30-31.

¹⁸ Paige believes that, in the long run, any movement toward economic union in Korea will depend largely upon North Korea's capacity to act independently in pursuing its own policies and economic growth in the manifest presence of Soviet and Chinese influence. Nationalistic pressures continue to test the process of Communization in the North, and as developing relations between the Soviet and Chinese regimes become more strained, North Korea may have a freer hand in determining its own course of events. Thus, the more flexibility and independence North Korea exercises under Communist hegemony, the more likely South Korea is to look favorably in that direction for forging a new partnership between the two Koreas. Glenn D. Paige, *The Korean People's Democratic Republic*. The Hoover Institution of War, Revolution, and Peace. (Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1966), p. 51.

Whatever possibilities may exist for North and South Korea to mutually reconcile their differences on grounds of economic motives, may finally rest in the hands of Korea's former colonial master, Japan. The Japanese presently maintain trade relations with the three major powers who have a paramount interest or stake in Korea's future course of development. The Japanese trade not only with the United States (its best market), but also with the Communist giants of Red China and Soviet Russia. In 1965, Japan exported \$245 million worth of goods to Red China, and \$168 million worth to Soviet Russia. Imports from those two countries, respectively, amounted to 225 and 240 million dollars. Red China is now Japan's best customer in its trade with the Communist Bloc. In addition, the Japanese trade with both South and North Korea. Exports to South Korea in 1965 were valued at \$180 million and those to North Korea amounted to \$16.5 million. Imports, respectively, were valued at 41 and 14.7 million dollars. Japan's trade with Red China, North Korea, and South Korea recorded significant gains in the period 1960-1965. Thus, on the surface at least, Japan's trade policy appears to separate politics from economics.

Japan's governing principle in matters relating to Korea has been labeled by most observers of Japanese-Korean relations as the "two Koreas policy". The term is not unambiguous, but generally ". . . it implies the policy of *Seikei Bunri* — under which Japan officially recognizes the ROK, but not the DPRK, while continuously trading with both."¹⁹ However, Japanese opinion is sharply divided over the policy. The leftists oppose granting political recognition to either the Republic of Korea or the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but would not preclude cultural and economic ties with the two regimes. The rightists position closely resembles the policy of *Seikei Bunri*. Debate over this issue proved to be a constant source of irritation between Japanese and ROK officials in drawing up the normalization treaties between the two governments in 1965. Only after delicate wording, was the Japan-ROK Treaty on Basic Relations ratified by the two governments. Article III of that treaty recognizes 'the Government of the Republic of Korea is the only lawful government in Korea as specified in the resolution 195 (III) of the United Nations General Assembly.' However, it is this very article containing the phrase 'as specified' (which was added at Japan's insistence) that Japan uses as an equivocation to defend its two Koreas policy. This phrase gives rise to different interpretations by the two governments, and thus creates a source of friction between them.²⁰

Prior to April 1961, Japan maintained a 'no direct trade' policy with North Korea. At that time, however, the Japanese government eased this restriction and permitted a small amount of 'barter trade' to be handleh

¹⁹ Soon Sung Cho, "Japan's Two Koreas Policy and the Problems of Korean Unification," *Asian Survey*, Vol. VII (October, 1967), pp. 711-713.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 703-708.

mainly through French trading firms. Simultaneously, North Korea announced the beginning of a Seven Year Economic Plan to extend through the period 1961-1967. The plan aimed at vitalizing North Korea's economy, by raising industrial output by over 300 per cent. In order to reach their goal, the North Koreans realized it was necessary for them to procure foreign materials and equipment. Red China was unable to supply these materials, and an untimely ideological dispute with the Soviets precluded their assistance. Forced to look elsewhere, North Korea turned toward industrial Japan. Japan's geographical proximity offered inexpensive water transport between the two countries, and the price of Japanese goods was favorable. Thereupon, the North Koreans initiated efforts to improve their relations with Japan, and attempted to persuade the latter to soften its trade policy with them, to the mutual benefit of both countries. With many Japanese investors showing interest in North Korea, Japan agreed to 'barter trade' with that regime, and subsequently, in November 1962, Japan abandoned the barter regulation. Japanese imports from North Korea are mainly mineral resources, raw materials which are vitally needed by Japanese industry. Their procurement was a significant factor prompting expansion of trade relations with the North Koreans.

Despite substantial growth of trade with both Koreas since 1960, the total amount of this trade is relatively small in proportion to Japan's overall trade volume. Even with Red Chinese trade included, the combined total of the three countries' trade with Japan comprises only about four per cent of Japan's total trade. In view of these observations, it is postulated that the two Koreas policy being pursued by Japan is conditioned by motives which override the economic importance of Korean trade to the Japanese economy. According to Cho, Japan's main concern over Korea continues to be the geographic proximity of that peninsula, and the threat of its takeover by a potential enemy.²¹ However, as long as South Korea continues to remain independent and militarily strong and seeks Japan's friendship and economic cooperation, it is doubtful that the Japanese government will seek to promote the unification issue. On the other hand, should South Korea achieve a stable economy,²² and upset the relative economic balance between the two Koreas, such a condition could produce enough frustration on behalf of the North Koreans, whereby they might instigate a serious military endeavor against South Korea. In this predicament Japan might be prompted

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 711-717.

²² The ROK is presently in its Second Live Year Plan. Designed to extend through 1971, the plan thus far has met with mounting success. Overall economic growth in 1967 amounted to nearly nine per cent, and the predicted growth rate for 1968 exceeds 12 per cent. Per capita income in South Korea rose from \$143 in 1967 to \$170 in 1968. Communist sources placed North Korea's per capita income at \$234 for 1967. Soon Sung Cho, "North and South Korea: Stepped-Up Aggression and the Search for New Security," *Asian Survey*, Vol. IX (January, 1969), pp. 29, 32, 38.

to help alleviate tensions over the divided peninsula. The point is, that Japan is in a favorable position to offer the appeal of greatly expanded trade with Red China, the two Koreas, and Soviet Russia as a basis for bartering for a change in the political climate of the Far East, a change which could have important effect on future developments concerning Korea. And such action may prove to be a step toward the reunification of Korea.

Volatile and dynamic forces for change are now sweeping the Far East, with the result that there is a desire to create some kind of a "third force" or regional organization to counter American, Russian, and Red Chinese political rivalries in the area. Over extensive areas of Asia today there is a keen awareness of a developing political and military vacuum. The growing threat of Red China's nuclear capability, and the apparent conviction that the United States seeks a gradual withdrawal from its assumed responsibilities of a heavy military burden in the Far East, leads many Asians to believe they must assume a more active role in providing for their own security and pursuit of peace. The idea of a "free" Asian collective security arrangement or force has already been sounded out. Reports indicate South Korea strongly favors such a plan, and has made overtures to officials of other Asian countries for their support. At present, however, the only regional organization which approaches the dimensions of such a plan is the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC), which strives to promote the economic and cultural cooperation of Asian countries. But, ASPAC, or some similar version of this organization, may eventually seek to undertake action toward providing for political and military cooperation among its members. In other words, the possibility that the "free" nations of the Western Pacific area might move toward closer unity through a progressive stage of separate economic, cultural, and political organizations similar to the "European movement" is a growing likelihood. Asian diplomacy hints more and more in this direction. Accordingly, observers of Asian affairs should be able to detect a gradual change in the mood of Far Eastern governments. This mood will, accordingly, reveal itself in a greater spirit of cooperation among the "free" Asian nations, and an acute awareness on their part for the need of some form of mutual security arrangement.

In light of these interpretations, American geopoliticians might take comfort in the fact that should a "free" Asian defense organization materialize, it may do much to achieve peace and stability in the Far East. Whatever the form of that organization, it may be meaningless in terms of the issue of Korean unification, but the prospects for normalizing peaceful relations between the two Koreas might then become more realistic. And this action undoubtedly will be more acceptable than the existing status quo in Korea.

However, the future United States role in Korea might continue as that of a guardianship of the Republic of Korea for many years to come.

If the North Koreans continue their present level of subversive activities against South Korea, the approximately 55,000 U.S. troops now in Korea, are likely to have their numbers increased in the years to come, rather than reduced.

In past years the political leadership of North Korea has vehemently denounced the United States as its major enemy and obstacle to Korean unification. Pyongyang radio has relentlessly and repeatedly labelled the Americans as imperialists. According to North Korean propaganda, the United States alone is responsible for the failure to unite the two Koreas. North Korea contends that if the United States would withdraw its forces from South Korea, and dissolve the mutual defense arrangement with the latter, the two halves of Korea could proceed with arrangements for unification. The paradox of North Korea's pronouncements is that, on one hand, the Pyongyang regime calls for American disengagement from Korea before procedural arrangements for unification can be implemented; yet, on the other, it apparently recognizes the fact that the United States has no intention of abandoning South Korea. An American withdrawal from South Korea would be like opening a Pandora's Box for the Communists. South Korea would be thrown into a state of confusion, and the North Koreans, based upon their past behavior, might be inclined to capitalize on the situation and bring on a new crisis. The Demilitarized Zone could, then, become a renewed scene of fighting, precipitated by the regime in North Korea, to act as a diversionary and cloak, to cover up its economic failures and loss of face. Based upon the above statements, the ruling clique in North Korea will, presumably, continue its tirade of propaganda against the United States, while simultaneously hoping to dismay the South Koreans.

Therefore, if American military forces in the south are increased, as this writer predicts, the breach now separating North and South Korea will continue, probably becoming wider. The animosities will be intensified. The North Korean Communists will be drawn closer into the camp of the Red Chinese. Whatever leanings, if any, the North Koreans may harbor toward the "peaceful coexistence" stance of the Soviet Union will probably be severed. At present, however, Soviet influence in North Korea appears to be significant, and gaining, as a result of increasing aid to that area.²³ Thus, Korea's significance will continue for the United States. As American troops continue to withdraw from bases in other parts of Asia, the chance that some of them will be reassigned to Korea becomes more of a reality.

One other likelihood seems ever possible. Some incident could produce a spark that would again ignite the conflict which was only temporarily

²³ In viewing or speculating on Russian intentions for Korea in the future, McCune believes the Russians have not entirely given up hope for a united Korea, and one within their sphere of political influence. In the meantime, the Russians intend to make Korea a sore spot for the United States, and continue to force the U.S. to commit valuable resources to that area. McCune, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-203.

terminated by the 1953 truce. No peace treaty has ever been signed to officially end the Korean War, and the existing truce is an uneasy one. Numerous border incidents occur along the Demilitarized Zone, such as shooting of military personnel, firing on aircraft in that vicinity, and violation of the Zone by unauthorized personnel. If accounts by the news media in recent years provide an accurate measure of these violations by numbers, then the situation there seems to be worsening instead of improving. An explosive situation could occur at any time, and thus end the temporary truce that prevails.

On occasions, however, truce lines have evolved into boundaries which are now recognizable as "permanent" features of the landscape, and more important, without many of the original strains and stresses which often accompanied their formation.²⁴ A good example is the boundary separating the Netherlands and Belgium.²⁵ According to Fischer, the permanency of a boundary tends to become more fixed with the prolongation of its existence.²⁶ Old rivalries and tensions do sometimes fade away, but in Korea they, like the "Old Soldier", are not likely to be soon forgotten.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Twice in its recent history Korea found herself caught up in the web of opposing struggle between the great powers, and was partitioned as a result of warfare. Today, the enigmatic problem of Korea is imposed by the division of the peninsula into separate spheres of influence between Communist and Western ideology. Many of the obstacles hindering movement toward reunification will, no doubt, remain insurmountable in the future, but the political fortunes of countries have shown that in time changes can be manifested in any established order. Through the channels of the Military Armistice Commission in Korea, certain avenues of communication have been kept open by reciprocal agreement which could lead to negotiation of the Korean dilemma.

Korea was partitioned for the second time in 1953, and all subsequent attempts to bring about an amicable settlement have proved fruitless. Divergent national interests continue to underlie the root of Korea's tensions. Most likely, the direction or course which the Koreans must follow in the years to come, will not be one of their own choosing; rather, Korea will likely remain in the grip of external influences emanating from distant puissant political bases.

²⁴ Whether such will be the case in relation to the Korean truce line, is highly speculative. Present indications do not point in that direction.

²⁵ Norman J. G. Pounds, *Political Geography* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963), pp. 64-67.

²⁶ Eric Fischer, "On Boundaries," *World Politics*, Vol. 1 (January, 1949), p. 196.

Obviously, the future of Korea hinges on a great many uncertainties. From the Korean point of view, the unification of their country remains the single most important objective. Whether the Koreans can bring about unification alone appears unlikely, especially in view of the peninsula's strategic importance and its political and geographical division between two opposing ideologies. For the Koreans the unification issue may loom as a matter of life or death, but from a geopolitical viewpoint unification achieved by a Pyrrhic victory is unacceptable. World public opinion will probably continue to prefer a divided Korea with a relative degree of stability as the best accommodation possible, at least for the foreseeable future. And such imposed solutions would probably not be acceptable to the Koreans.