



GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES TOWARD KOREAN UNIFICATION

By Thomas P. Dolan, Kyle Christensen, and Kimberly Gill

Abstract

For the past two decades, studies have indicated that popular support for Korean unification is dropping. However, no explanation is offered for this. This report addressed a 2012 study undertaken to examine the public opinion of South Koreans to determine which demographic factors might be influencing this drop in popular support for unification.

Because earlier studies of South Korean attitudes toward unification sampled the population in Korea, and were conducted in the Korean language, this study did as well. Factors other than age were examined, including level of education, location, and military service. Age was found to be the most dominant factor. However, rather than finding that older Koreans were eager for unification, the data showed that this group feels that unification will never happen. This group (61 and older) shows the greatest desire to either delay unification generally, or wait until there is no threat from North Korea.

As the older generation, which views the United States more favorably, passes on, the younger generation will become a larger percentage of the voting public, which may complicate future dealings with the U.S. and its military presence in the Korean Peninsula.

This study shows that age is a factor in many aspects of public opinion toward the implications of Korean unification and toward the presence of U.S. military personnel in Korea. It also reveals significant leanings about how South Koreans would deal with the continued presence of U.S. military forces after unification.

Key words: *unification, survey data, Ministry of Unification, field research, age*

Introduction

After more than 70 years of separation, both Koreas claim to be pursuing unification/ reunification.¹ The Ministry of Unification in Seoul, a government agency, and the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea in Pyongyang, an agency of the Korean Workers' Party in North Korea, both assert the importance of unification, but there is no agreement on how unification will take place. Scenarios include the German model (essentially the absorption of the East by the West), and the Vietnam model, which would be a military conquest of the South by the North. Neither of these is likely; the German case is very different because East and West Germany never fought a war against each other, and their border was comparatively open compared to the Military Demarcation Line/Demilitarized Zone which separates the Koreas.² The Vietnamese model is also unlikely because despite North Korea's relatively large military (compared to South Korea's), North Korea does not have the resources for a protracted conventional armed conflict. A more likely scenario would be that South Korea (with American help) would defeat North Korea (which would probably not receive direct assistance from China or Russia), but this would be at great cost to both sides.

A far more desirable situation would be for unification without armed conflict, but this has its own complications. Most South Korean and American predictions assume that this type of unification would result from regime failure in North Korea.

Most American assessments assume that the failure of the North Korean regime will occur in the short term, generally within ten years of the time of the study. This time period was used in the 1980s, the 1990s, and is still being used today. Assessments by

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South Korean researchers tend to take a longer view of 30-50 years. These South Korean estimates generally assume that a unified Korea will be one in which the North is absorbed by the South; the proposals offered by North Korea tend to foresee a confederation in which the North would maintain its current political structure in a confederation of the two sides. Studies by the Ministry of Unification have indicated that although the official government policy pursues unification, popular support for unification is dropping. However, official reports give no explanation for this. In the summer of 2012 these researchers began a study to examine the public opinion of South Koreans to determine which demographic factors might be influencing this drop in popular support for unification. One hypothesis was that since older Koreans would feel closer ties to the North because of remaining family relationships, they would more strongly support unification. As this older generation becomes a smaller part of the total population, overall support for unification would appear to reduce. This generational difference, as well as many other demographic factors seen in the survey document (Appendices 1 and 2), was examined with surprising results.

Cost of Unification

Estimates of the cost of Korean reunification vary widely: from \$200-300 million annually to tens of trillions over many decades. The lower estimates appear to be based on the assumption that after reunification, neither side will need to support the large military expenditures it had before unification, and that large savings can be made from military cutbacks. A major problem with this is that if the estimated one million North Korean military personnel are demobilized and simply lose their jobs, a situation like that which occurred in post-invasion Iraq could result. Any insurgency that might follow would make successful unification impossible. This is sometimes dismissed with a prediction that the newly-unemployed former military personnel would make up a large labor force, bringing down labor costs and thus stimulating the Korean economy.³

With all the possible scenarios and variables involved in this question, no single study has, or could hope to, come up with a final answer. In reviewing completed studies, the most common belief was the imminent failure of the Kim dynasty in North Korea. When one considers that this regime, which began in President Truman's time (1948) and has existed through the administration of Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter,

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Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama, perhaps failure should not be assumed, at least in the short term. The North Korean regime was established fourteen years before Fidel Castro led the Cuban revolution.

Reasons to be Skeptical of Regime Failure in the North

The “Arab Spring” of 2011 demonstrates that regimes long in power can be brought down through popular uprising, as seen in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. However, other regimes (Iran and Syria) have resisted such internal pressure. The successful popular movements have generally credited social communications networks for the ability to coordinate group actions; these networks are not widespread in North Korea. Earlier domestic uprisings against authoritarian governments, such as the 1989 overthrow of Nicolae Ceausescu, took place without modern communications, but in societies far freer than North Korea.

Other partitioned countries have reunited, including Vietnam, Germany, and Yemen. The means by which these reunifications have occurred vary widely, from military defeat in the case of Vietnam, to political collapse in the case of Germany, to political accommodation in the case of Yemen. A variety of scenarios under which the Koreas would unite have been proposed. In the early 1990s, the former Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, The Honorable Choi Kwang Soo wrote of the consequences that would result “if Kim Jong-Il fails to secure a stable power basis in the post Kim Il-sung period and a power struggle erupts.”⁴ As with many of the more recent predictions of North Korean regime failure, Minister Choi has been proven wrong. Similarly, Nicholas Eberstadt⁵ and Stares and Wit⁶ have predicted the imminent failure of the North Korean regime.

The German model of reunification would involve regime failure on the part of either North Korea or South Korea. Given the economic and diplomatic success of the South as compared



with that of the North, only regime failure in the North would be likely. Such failure could occur over a relatively short period, as postulated by many American researchers⁷ or over a protracted period, as envisioned by most South Korean researchers. Assuming that South Korea would remain intact to assist the North, a nonviolent reunification would result in the issues of the assimilation of North Koreans, education, dealing with the conflicting ideologies, nutrition, and of course the cost to bring about long-term stability.

In his very thorough study of Korean culture, *Korea and Its Futures: Unification and the Unfinished War*, Roy Richard Grinker went beyond methodological estimations of the cost of unification, and examined some of the basic assumptions about what unification would mean to each side. His conclusion was that while the South sees unification as “the southern conquest and assimilation of the north,”⁸ the North envisions a joining of the two Korean cultures as they exist now. Grinker also examines the generational differences as South Koreans see the results of unification; older South Koreans see unification as “an endpoint something to achieve before death” while younger South Koreans see it as “an event ... a place from which to launch an autonomous and authentic Korean history.”⁹

This bifurcation raises a major issue between the generations; while older (South) Koreans see the opportunity for unification decreasing as they near the end of their lives, younger South Koreans would take the more pragmatic approach of delaying unification until the North Korean economy has improved to the stage where the cost of unification would be lower, since it is the South that will have to bear the bulk of the financial burden.

Auerbach, Chun, and Yoo¹⁰ conclude that most of the costs of unification are likely to fall on the shoulders of current and future generations of South Koreans due to the disparities between North and South Korea. They conclude that the disparities between the two states should decrease as North Korea adopts South Korea’s fiscal policies and its economy grows.

A detailed recent analysis from the Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification consists of a set of estimates providing short-term (10-year), mid-term (20-year), and long-term (30-year) scenarios and expectations.¹¹ This study estimates that the first year of unification would cost between \$47 billion and \$213 billion;¹² at the upper level, these equate to 6.8 percent of the GDP of the South and 59.9 percent of the GDP of the North, considerably higher than the percentage cost to East and West Germany.

Predictions like this are disturbing the younger South Koreans, who see this as a threat to the economic security and prosperity they currently enjoy.

Another publication by the Korea Institute for National Unification echoes the declining South Korean interest in national unification, citing studies which showed that 91.4 percent of South Koreans surveyed in 1994 supported it, with this number falling to 83.9 percent in 2005 and 76.6 percent in 2010. In particular, younger South Koreans see unification as an event that will impact negatively on them personally.¹³ To test these estimates, this research team conducted an in-country study of South Korean attitudes toward unification in an attempt to assess the generational differences on the subject.

The assumption on which this study was based is that as the Korean population ages, the portion of South Koreans who hold unification as a necessary achievement will continue to diminish. This will reduce popular pressure for unification and the sacrifices it would require. In the 30- to 50-year timeframe envisioned by South Korea’s Ministry of Unification studies, popular support for unification will further erode as older Koreans pass away and become a smaller portion of the population.

Perceptions and Projections

One of the premises of this study, and the others cited, is that Korean unification will take place eventually. Although the regimes of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il were maintained for over sixty years, the stresses brought about by failed socialism, nature, and a growing awareness in North Korea of its situation relative to other countries continue to pressure the regime. Nevertheless, a transition to the third generation, led by Kim Jong-un, has begun and appears to be unchallenged. The younger Kim has gone so far as to execute his uncle Jang Song-taek, the husband of Kim Jong-il’s sister, in establishing his authority. This demonstrates Kim Jong-un’s willingness to hold on to his position and questions the assumption of regime failure in the North.

Most observers believe that North Korea’s economy has significantly deteriorated since the 1990s. Famines have exacerbated the problems and further withered the state. Despite the numerous economic and social problems, North Korea continues to spend a large amount of its budget on military expenditures and its nuclear weapons program. Along this unsustainable path, some researchers believe that North Korea may soon be forced to economically integrate or reunify



with South Korea. With the possibility of unification, comes the uncertainty of exactly how this will occur, what type of foreign involvement will be utilized, and how the populations of the two Koreas will integrate.

Review of the Literature

Many analysts have evaluated the behaviors of both Koreas as it relates to foreign involvement. Rhee noted that while the two Germanys accepted American and Soviet involvement in their movement toward unification, both Koreas have rejected foreign interference. The North sees such involvement by the United States (which it identifies as an imperialist aggressor) and by Japan (which colonized the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945) as intolerable, and the South wishes to avoid having this issue as a barrier toward any progress that might be made. Rhee pointed out that each Korea has proposed its own plan for reunification; the North desires a Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo (DCFRK), while the South wants a Korean National Community Unification Formula (KNCUF). One fundamental difference between these approaches is that the DCFRK would be a state, while the KNCUF would be a process.¹⁵ An alternative proposal was offered by South Korean President Roh Tae-woo in 1989; Roh's Korean National Community Unification Formula would have established a "Korean Commonwealth." However, because this plan, modified somewhat by Roh's successor Kim Young Sam had substantial preconditions for implementation, it was not put in place.¹⁶

Norman Levin examined South Korean public opinion in his "The Shape of Korea's Future: South Korean Attitudes toward Unification and Long-Term Security Issues" in 1999.¹⁷ Comparing data from 1996 and 1999, he noted a diminishing level of regard toward Americans and increasing respect for the Chinese; he also found that South Koreans were becoming less enthusiastic about the idea of swift unification. In 1999 more than 45 percent of respondents felt that unification would be more than ten years away, or would never happen; this has been proven true.¹⁸ At the time this was written (five years after the death of Kim Il-sung and two years after Kim Jong-il had assumed full power as ruler in the North), South Koreans had begun to feel less insecure about threats from the North and concerns were developing about the U.S. provoking insecurity through its hard line toward Pyongyang. By 1999 South Koreans were becoming somewhat doubtful of their country's long-standing security

relationship with the United States.¹⁹ The following year, South Korean President Kim Dae-jung surprised the U.S. by traveling to Pyongyang for a summit meeting with Kim Jong-il, after which Secretary of State Madeline Albright also visited Pyongyang with an American delegation.

As these events occurred, Robert Dujarric wrote that "the nature of the North Korean state makes it difficult to affirm with any certainty that it can survive the next decade or even the next 12 months. Therefore, policy-makers should be prepared for a sudden collapse."²⁰ He advised that the U.S. should prepare for a "large and prolonged U.S. military presence in Korea and Japan after Korean unification."

Dujarric concluded that some agencies in the U.S. (the Pentagon, etc.) will advocate a strong U.S. military role in a unified Korea, while others (Congress, the Department of Commerce, and U.S. Trade Representative) will focus on economics and trade.²¹ The end of a military threat may lead some to seek reductions in military spending, in the way a "peace dividend" was expected in the U.S. in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Dujarric notes that the financial burden to the South after unification will likely bring any Korean support to U.S. forces (Host Nation Support, etc.) to an end.²² If U.S. forces are not permitted to remain in Korea, Dujarric states, they would have to relocate to Japan. This would not be welcomed, and likely not permitted, by the Japanese.

Scott Snyder wrote in early 2011 describing the differences between German unification and the possible Korean scenarios, noting that German unification was a negotiated process in which East German authorities accepted that they had "lost legitimacy in the eyes of the East German people to govern effectively."²³ This is very different from the North Korean survival strategy explained by Byman and Lind.

Snyder sees the U.S. and China as key players in any set of circumstances which would bring about Korean reunification. He noted that China was willing to support the government of the North even after the military provocations of 2010 (the sinking of the South Korean warship Cheonan and the artillery shelling of Yeonpyeong-do) because China values peace and stability in the region, and because stability furthers its (China's) economic interests.

One more detailed and recent analysis comes from the Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification. This report consists of a set of estimates providing short-term (10-year), mid-term (20-year),



and long-term (30-year) scenarios and expectations. All of these are based on the assumption of North-South agreements on the elimination of nuclear weapons and a peace agreement between the two sides.²⁴ This study notes that public support for unification in South Korea is decreasing; in 2007, 21 percent of respondents in a survey saw “no need” for unification; by 2011 this had risen to 70 percent, based largely over concern for the cost to South Koreans.²⁵

Methodology

Because earlier studies of South Korean attitudes toward unification sampled the population in Korea, and were conducted in the Korean language, this study did as well. This required developing the survey document (Appendix 1) in Korean and having it reviewed by native Korean speakers, including the Director of Research of the Ministry of Unification. These reviews corrected some minor grammatical and syntax errors, and at the request of the Ministry of Unification specific references to China were deleted from one question.

Conducted without external funding, this survey was administered in the South Korean cities of Seoul, Incheon, and Busan during May of 2012. A total of 214 surveys were completed over a two-week period. The survey was limited to Korean speakers over the age of eighteen. Collection sites included universities, including Yonsei University in Seoul, mass transit facilities, and locations such as museums to draw large crowds. Individuals and small groups of people were approached by the lead researcher, who explained in Korean what the purpose of the study was, and asked to complete the survey. While many of the questions related to demographics or could be answered by checking boxes, many questions were open-ended, which required translation once collected. This sometimes resulted in complex response tabulation and some very interesting responses.

The data were sorted using SPSS, and univariate and bivariate analyses were prepared. One fact noted immediately was that the age group 18-25 was overrepresented; the population pyramid of the Republic of Korea shows that the population there has been shrinking for the last 35 years,²⁶ and while the actual population of 18-to-25-year-olds is actually smaller than that of the next two groups (26-40 and 41-60), the number of younger respondents was approximately twice as large (proportionally) than it should have been. For this reason the data were examined as percentages of the population group, rather than using raw numbers.

Assumptions/Hypotheses

1. As noted above, an assumption of this study was that the apparent decline in support for unification was based on the decline in numbers of older South Koreans (61 years and older). It was assumed that these older people would have stronger feelings toward what relatives they might have in the North, and with their numbers declining, overall support for unification would decline. Question 10 specifically asked if the respondent knew of any close relatives still living in North Korea.

2. Regarding factors preventing unification, it was presumed that older South Koreans would have strong negative feelings toward the government of North Korea, and especially toward North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. Choices in Question 12 included the governments of North Korea, South Korea, and the U.S., as well as North Korea’s nuclear weapons, and the opportunity to list other factors.

3. It was assumed that regarding popular attitudes toward the presence of American military forces in South Korea, older Koreans would have more favorable views because these people would remember American support during the Korean War, while younger Koreans do not share those feelings. Questions 16, 17, and 18 of the survey asked about the proximity and frequency of exposure to U.S. military personnel, as well as the respondents’ attitudes toward them. Question 19 asked why U.S. military personnel were stationed in South Korea.

4. Regarding the role of U.S. military forces in a unified Korea, no assumptions were made. Discussions at the Marine Corps University during the 2010 *Emerald Express Strategic Symposium Series: Confronting Security Challenges on the Korean Peninsula* indicated that there was no consensus among the ROK government, U.S. government, and the U.S. military regarding the role of the U.S. military after a regime collapse in North Korea. Question 20 asked, “After unification, what role should U.S. military forces have in Korea?”

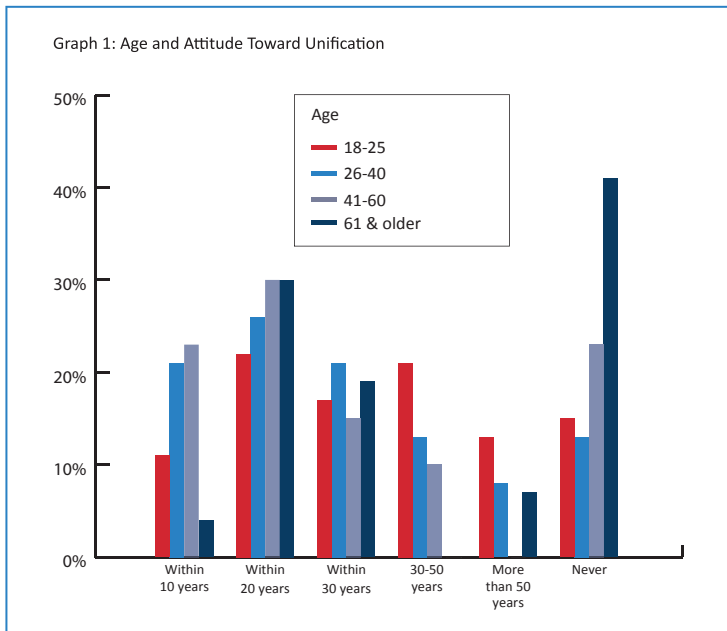
Analysis

The primary question of this study was addressed through a bivariate analysis of Question 1 (“What is your age?”) and Question 11 (“When will the Koreas be unified?”). The results, shown in Graph 1, show that the highest overall belief is that unification will occur within 20 years, a smaller number believing it will happen within 10 years, declining numbers within 30 or 30-to-50 years,



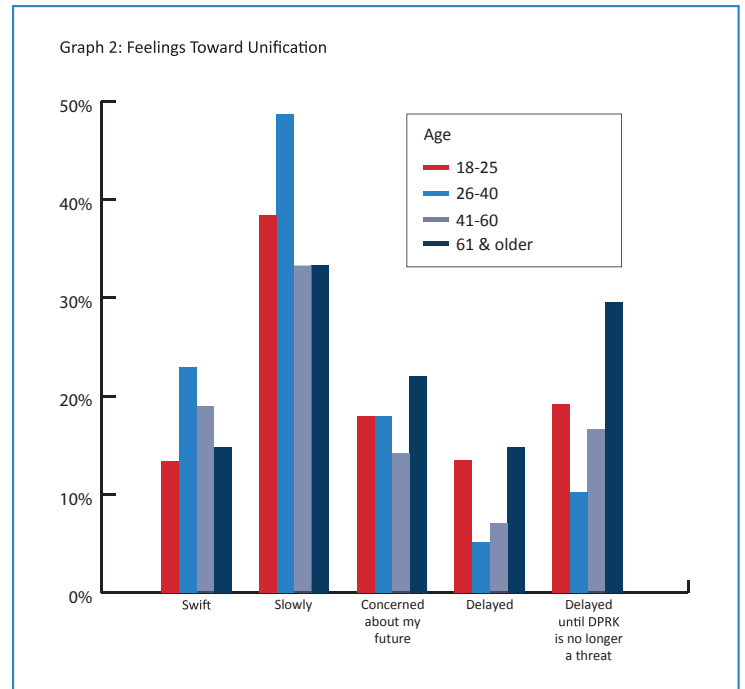
and even fewer saying “more than 50 years.” However, a greater number stated that unification will “never” occur.

All age groups show an increase from the 10-year timeframe to the 20-year timeframe and all show a drop to the 30-year timeframe. However, the youngest group (18 to 25 years old) shows increased belief that unification will occur in the 30- to 50-year timeframe, with that all the age groups having less confidence that unification will occur more than 50 years out. The most revealing aspect of this graph is the column for the 61-and-older group; very few of these foresee unification within 10 years, more within 20 (which might be within their lifetimes), fewer within 30, none 30-to-50, a small number over 0, but the greatest percentage (over 40 percent) saying that unification will never happen. This seems to indicate that this age group has given up on any expectation of unification. A similar pattern is shown for the next oldest group, with other age groups showing roughly the same.



While this graph addresses when South Koreans expect unification to occur, another question asked when they would like it to happen (통일에 관한 당신의 개인적인 감정을 어떻게 느끼시나요? / “What are your personal feelings about unification?”). Graph 2 shows that support for unification varies by the options presented (swift unification, slow unification, concern over unification, delayed unification, delayed until DPRK is no longer a threat).

unification should be delayed, unification should wait until there is no threat), the different age groups generally follow each other. The most significant variation is that the oldest age group (61 and older) shows the greatest desire to either delay unification generally, or wait until there is no threat. Interestingly, the age group which most closely reflects this is the 18-25 year group.



The next topic dealt with the factors preventing unification. As shown in Table 1, while the most common factor was the DPRK government (58.1 percent of respondents), the U.S. government was seen as the next most common, with DPRK nuclear weapons (17.2 percent) only slightly more common than the ROK government (16.2 percent). The greatest deviation in responses among the age groups came from the responses about the governments of the DPRK and the U.S.; 30.3 percent of the 18-25 group saw the DPRK government as the biggest obstacle to unification, while only 8.1 percent of the 61-and-older group held the North’s government at fault. An even greater spread occurs with the responses about the U.S. government; 13.6 percent of the younger group see the U.S. as an obstacle to unification, while only 1.0 percent of the older group faults the U.S.

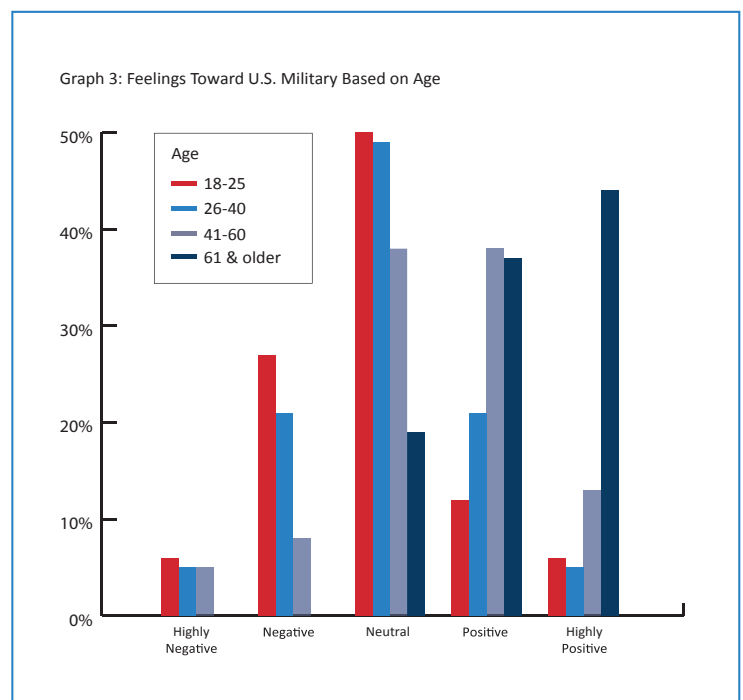


Table 1: Factors Preventing Unification

		Age				
		18-25	26-40	41-60	61 & older	Total
DPRK Government	Count	60	17	22	16	
	% of Total	30.3%	8.6%	11.1%	8.1%	
DPRK Nuclear Weapons	Count	10	7	8	9	
	% of Total	5.1%	3.5%	4.0%	4.5%	
ROK Government	Count	19	6	4	3	
	% of Total	9.6%	3.0%	2.0%	1.5%	
U.S. Government	Count	27	9	8	2	
	% of Total	13.6%	4.5%	4.0%	1.0%	
China	Count	4	2	3	2	
	% of Total	2.0%	1.0%	1.5%	1.0%	
Japan	Count	1	1	1	2	
	% of Total	.5%	.5%	.5%	1.0%	
Russia	Count	1	1	0	1	
	% of Total	.5%	.5%	0%	.5%	
Total	Count	97	37	39	25	198
	% of Total	49.0%	18.7%	19.7%	12.6%	100.0%

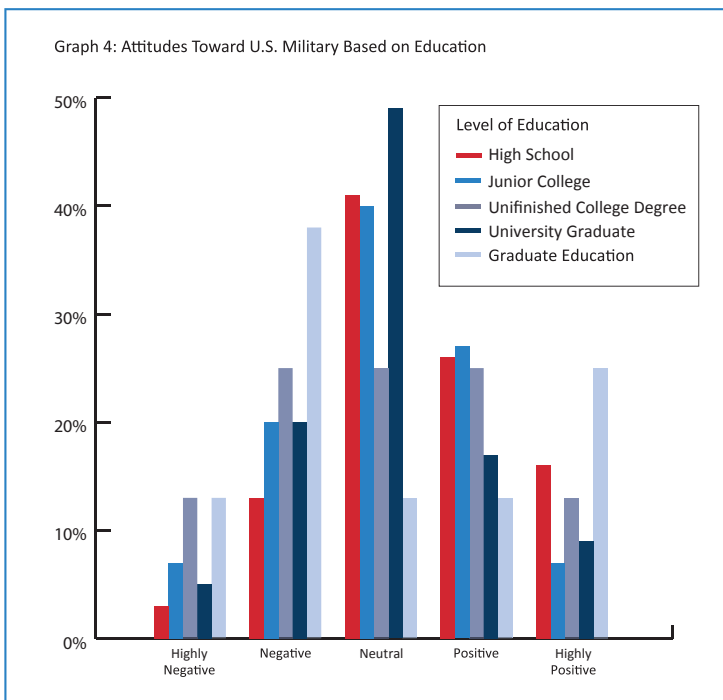
This presents a major challenge to the governments of the U.S. and the Republic of Korea, especially the Ministry of Unification. As the older generation, which views the United States more favorably, passes on, this younger generation will become a larger percentage of the voting public, which may complicate future dealings with the U.S. and its military presence in the Korean Peninsula.

The attitudes of respondents toward the U.S. military presence in Korea varied widely within and among the age groups. The overall distribution of feelings is largely “Neutral” to “Highly Positive,” with the 18-25 age group overwhelmingly “Neutral,” but slightly more “Negative” than “Positive” as seen on Graph 3. The 26-40 and 41-60 age groups had only small percentages (less than 10 percent) as “Highly Negative,” with much more reporting “Neutral.” Interestingly, the 41-60 group had as many reporting “Positive” as “Neutral,” while fewer than 20 percent of the 61-and-older group reported “Neutral” and larger percentages reporting “Positive” or “Highly Positive.” This reflects the opinions expressed in Table 1.

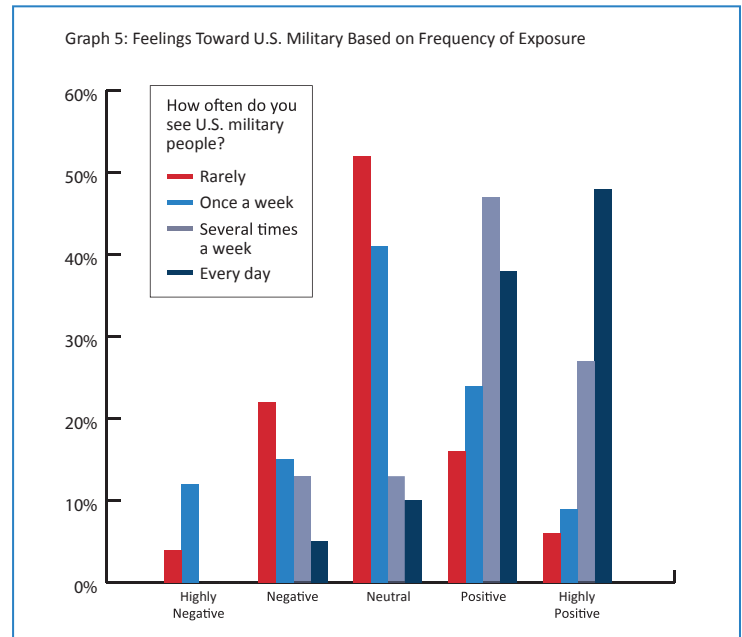




When compared with the effects of education on attitudes toward the U.S. military, age is a much more defining characteristic. Graph 4 breaks down responses to the question “미군 군인들에 관한 당신의 감정을 어떻게 느끼시나요?” (What are your feelings toward the U.S. military?) in terms of education; while the overall distribution approximates a bell curve, the only education level that departs significantly from this curve is that of respondents with graduate education, who were more inclined to view the U.S. military more as “Negative” or “Highly Positive.” Those who had not finished their university education were most equally distributed as “Negative,” “Neutral,” or “Positive.”



Another factor dealing with attitudes toward the U.S. military was that of frequency of contact. Graph 5 shows that while those respondents who “Rarely” saw U.S. military personnel (얼마나 자주 주한 미군들을 보십니까? / “How often do you see U.S. military people?”) displayed a bell-curve distribution from “Highly Negative” to “Highly Positive,” those who reported more frequent contact were more likely to see the U.S. military in a “Positive” or “Highly Positive” light. This graph also shows that most South Koreans do not have frequent contact with U.S. military personnel.



Although Graph 5 shows general feelings toward the U.S. military personnel stations in the Republic of Korea, the responses to a subsequent question (통일 이후, 미군이 한국에서 해야 할 역할은 무엇입니까? / After unification, what role should U.S. military forces have in Korea?) reveal what the authors see as a major policy problem for the Ministry of Unification, and other agencies which seek to maintain a U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula. In response to this question about the role U.S. military forces might have, respondents were offered choices of staying to assist the Korean people and provide security; training Korean military, then leaving; staying in Korea, restricted to their bases; or staying in Korea, but without the protection of a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA).

Role	Percentage
Stay in Korea to provide security	18.6%
Train ROK Army, then leave	17.6%
Stay, but only on bases	24.8%
Stay without SOFA	36.2%
Stay with SOFA	0.5%
Stay for peacekeeping	1.4%
Help train DPRK	0.5%
Leave Korea	1.9%



While the largest percentage of respondents indicated a desire to have U.S. forces remain in Korea, the greatest proportion (36.2 percent) indicated that the Americans should stay without the protection of the Status of Forces Agreement. Only one-half of one percent indicated that SOFA should be provided for U.S. forces if they were to stay after unification. While this can be understood in light of how SOFA has been used to place those American military personnel who have broken Korean law under U.S. control, and effectively remove them from punishment by Korean authorities, SOFA is also seen by many as an extension of the practice of “extraterritoriality” which was introduced into those Asian countries which were undermined by the “unequal treaties” of the 1800s.²⁷ While this may be an expression of the resentment felt by Koreans toward the long-term presence of U.S. military forces in their country, it must be noted that the inability of the U.S. to obtain a Status of Forces Agreement with the government of Iraq in 2012 was the reason for America’s withdrawal from that country. A failure to provide a SOFA for U.S. forces in a unified Korea would very likely lead to a similar departure.

Although the U.S. provides a relatively small percentage of the total military in South Korea at present (approximately 28,000 U.S. military personnel, compared with over 650,000 South Korean military personnel)^{28,29}, the departure of U.S. forces would signal a reduced American commitment to stability in the region. Alternatively, it could be argued, that an American departure might make unification more acceptable to China, since the unified Korea would be free of American military influence. This would be in line with the premise of Selig Harrison’s *Korea Endgame: A Strategy for Reunification and U.S. Disengagement*.³⁰

Surprising Responses

One question on the survey asked if the respondents knew of any family members living in North Korea. Having seen the large number of South Koreans eager to participate in past family reunion events, and the emotion shown especially by South Koreans in these, it was surprising that only 12 respondents (less than one-half of one percent) reported any knowledge of family members in the North, and only two mentioned brothers or sisters. These respondents, of course, were in the older age categories. There was no consistency among the respondents who acknowledged family in the North as to their expectations of when unification might occur, with answers ranging from “Within 10 years” to “Never.”

When asked about the problems Korea will face after unification, the largest proportions of respondents identified assimilation (53 percent), followed by the economy (45 percent). Property claims were selected by 11.6 percent.

Implications for Further Research

This study shows that age is a factor in many aspects of public opinion toward the implications of Korean unification and toward the presence of U.S. military personnel in Korea. It also reveals significant leanings about how South Koreans would deal with the continued presence of U.S. military forces after unification. Continued American military assistance would only be possible if a SOFA could be negotiated; this is a policy challenge for the Ministry of Unification, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Department of Defense.

The age group which was least favorable toward a continued U.S. involvement in Korean affairs, and which perceived the U.S. as an obstacle to unification to the greatest extent, was that of 18-24 years. Conversely, the 61-and older group viewed Americans most favorably, and did not see America as an obstacle to unification. As this older group passes on, the feelings of the younger Koreans sampled in this study, and those who will come of age as the years pass, will have a larger political voice in the democracy that has developed in the Republic of Korea. What is needed is an examination of how these younger Koreans develop their attitudes toward national unification and the other factors addressed in this study. The authors intend to conduct a follow-on study which will focus on Koreans in the 18-24 age group to examine the inputs that have contributed to their beliefs on the subject.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to those who assisted with data collection and tabulation for this study, including Dr. Kim Doug Joong of Kyonggi University, student assistant Kim Daeuk of Kyonggi University, Dr. Gabriel Fife of Dong-A University, graduate research assistant Morgan Hayden, and research assistant Alessandro Raimondo of Columbus State University. Special thanks are given to Mr. Hwang Bonyong, Director of Research at the Republic of Korea Unification Ministry for his assistance in facilitating the field work portion of this study.



Endnotes

- ¹ The terms “unification” and “reunification” often used interchangeably; their significance is that older Koreans see the joining of the two Koreas as a return to the status quo, while younger South Koreans see it as a new condition. The Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification uses 통일, which translates as “unification.”
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Appendix 1: Survey instrument (in English)

Survey of South Korean Attitudes toward Unification and the Presence of U.S. Military Forces in Korea

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

1. What is your age?
 - a. 18-25
 - b. 26-40
 - c. 41-60
 - d. 61 or older

2. In what province were you born?

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Kyōnggi-Do c. Ch'ungchōng-Namdo e. Chōlla-Bukdo g. Kyōngsang-Bukdo i. Jeju-do k. I was not born in Korea. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> b. Kangwon-Do d. Ch'ungchōng-Bukdo f. Chōlla-Namdo h. Kyōngsang-Namdo j. Other
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3. In what province do you live now?

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Kyōnggi-Do c. Ch'ungchōng-Namdo e. Chōlla-Bukdo g. Kyōngsang-Bukdo i. Jeju-do 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> b. Kangwon-Do d. Ch'ungchōng-Bukdo f. Chōlla-Namdo h. Kyōngsang-Namdo
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4. Do you live in a city, or in a rural area?
 - a. Large city
 - b. Small city
 - c. Rural area

5. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

6. What is your highest education level?
 - a. High school
 - b. Vocational school
 - c. Junior college
 - d. Began college, but did not graduate
 - e. University graduate
 - f. Graduate education

7. Have you served in the military?
 - a. Yes, I was enlisted.
 - b. Yes, I was an officer.
 - c. Yes, I was a KATUSA (Korean Augmentee to U.S. Army).
 - d. No, I did not serve in the military.

8. Have you travelled outside Korea?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No



9. Have you lived outside Korea?
- Yes
 - No
10. Do you know if any of your close relatives are still living in North Korea?
- Yes, parents
 - Yes, brothers or sisters
 - Yes, but not my immediate family
 - No

QUESTIONS ABOUT UNIFICATION

11. When will the Koreas be unified?
- Within 10 years
 - Within 20 years
 - Within 30 years
 - 30-50 years
 - More than 50 years
 - Never
12. What is preventing unification?
- North Korea's government
 - North Korea's nuclear weapons
 - South Korea's government
 - U.S. government
 - Other international factors. Specify: _____
-
13. What problems will Korea face after unification?
- Economy (cost of unification)
 - Assimilation of North Koreans
 - Threat from China
 - Property claims
 - Other problems. Specify: _____
-
14. What are your personal feelings about unification?
- I would welcome a swift unification.
 - Unification should take place slowly.
 - I am concerned about how unification will affect my future.
 - Unification should be delayed until the economy improves.
 - Unification should not occur until North Korea is no longer a threat.
15. How will unification affect you?
- The reduced threat of war will make life better.
 - The reduced threat of war will mean less spending on defense, and life will improve.
 - The burden of supporting the people from the North will mean more taxes.
 - Unification will not affect me.



QUESTIONS ABOUT U.S. MILITARY FORCES IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

16. Do you live in an area where many U.S. military people are stationed?
- Yes
 - No
17. How often do you see U.S. military people?
- Every day
 - Several times a week
 - Once a week
 - Rarely
18. What are your feelings toward U.S. military people?
- Highly positive
 - Positive
 - Neutral
 - Negative
 - Highly negative
19. In your opinion, why are U.S. military people stationed in the ROK?
- They are here to protect against an attack from North Korea.
 - They are here to assist the ROK Army.
 - They were originally here to protect against an attack, but they are not needed now.
 - They are here for American security interests in Asia, not for Korean security.
 - Other reasons. Specify: _____

 - I do not know why U.S. military people are in Korea.
20. After unification, what role should U.S. military forces have in Korea?
- They should stay to assist the Korean people and provide security.
 - They should train Korean military people, then leave.
 - They should stay in Korea, but be restricted to their bases.
 - They should stay in Korea, but they should not have the special protection of the Status of Forces Agreement.
 - Other roles. Specify: _____

FINAL QUESTION

21. Which statement best explains your feelings about unification?
- Unification will restore Korea to the country it should be.
 - Unification will begin a very different situation for Korea.
 - There is no way to predict what will happen after unification.



Appendix 2: Survey instrument (in Korean)

통일과 주한 미군 주재에 대한 남한 국민의 태도 서베이

참가자 정보

1. 연령은?

- 18-25 26-40 41-60 61세 이상 관람가.

2. 어느 지역에서 태어나셨습니까?

- 경기도 강원도 충청남도
 충청북도 전라북도 전라남도
 경상북도 경상남도 제주도
 기타 한국에서 태어나지 않았다.

3. 현재 어느 지역에 거주하십니까?

- 경기도 강원도 충청남도
 충청북도 전라북도 전라남도
 경상북도 경상남도 제주도

4. 도시와 지방 중 어디에 거주하시나요?

- 대도시 소도시 지방

5. 성별은 무엇입니까 ?

- 남성 여성

6. 최종 학력이 무엇입니까?

- 고등학교 2년제 대학교
 대학교 중퇴 4년제 대학교
 대학원

7. 군입대 경험이 있으십니까?

- 네, 사병이었습니다.
 네, 장교였습니다.
 네, 카투사였습니다.
 아니요, 군입대한 적이 없습니다.

8. 해외 여행 경험이 있으십니까?

- 네
 아니요

9. 해외 거주 경험이 있으십니까?

- 네
 아니요



10. 가까운 친척 중에 현재도 북한에 생존하고 계신 분이 있으십니까?

- 네, 부모님
- 네, 형제 혹은 자매
- 네, 하지만 직계 가족은 아닙니다.
- 아니요

통일에 관한 질문

11. 언제 한국이 통일 될거라 예상하십니까?

- 10년 이내
- 20년 이내
- 30년 이내
- 30~50년 사이에
- 50년 이후에
- 안 될것이다.

12. 통일을 막고 있는 것이 무엇이라 생각하십니까?

- 북한 정부
- 북한의 핵무기
- 남한 정부
- 미국 정부
- 기타 국제 요인들. 구체적으로 적어주세요: _____

13. 통일 이후 한국이 직면할 문제가 무엇이라 생각하십니까?

- 경제 (막대한 통일 비용)
- 통합에 따른 사회적 혼란
- 혼란그리고 재산권 분쟁
- 기타 문제. 구체적으로 적어주세요: _____

14. 통일에 관한 당신의 개인적인 감정을 어떻게 느끼십니까?

- 신속한 통일을 환영한다.
- 통일은 천천히 이뤄져야 한다.
- 통일이 나의 장래에 어떤 영향을 미칠지 염려된다.
- 경제가 향상될 때까지 통일은 지연되어야 한다.
- 북한이 더이상 위협적인 존재가 아닐 때까지 통일이 되면 안된다.

15. 통일이 당신에게 어떤 영향을 미칠까요?

- 전쟁 위협이 줄어들어 더 나은 생활이 될 것이다.
- 전쟁 위협이 줄면 국방비 지출이 감소될 것이니, 생활은 향상될 것이다.
- 북한 국민 보조로 인한 부담때문에 세금이 더 많아 질 것이다.
- 통일은 내게 영향을 미치지 않을 것이다.



한국에 체류하는 주한 미군에 관한 질문

16. 주한 미군들이 많이 거주하는 지역에 살고 계십니까?
- 네
 - 아니요
17. 얼마나 자주 주한 미군들을 보십니까?
- 매일
 - 한 주에 여러번
 - 한 주에 한 번
 - 거의 못 본다.
18. 미군 군인들에 관한 당신의 감정을 어떻게 느끼십니까?
- 매우 긍정적
 - 긍정적
 - 보통
 - 부정적
 - 매우 부정적
19. 왜 미군이 대한 민국에 주재하고 있다고 생각하십니까?
- 북한의 공격으로부터 보호하기 위해서
 - 대한민국 군대를 보조하기 위해서
 - 처음에는 공격으로 부터 보호하기 위해서 였지만, 지금은 필요하지 않다.
 - 한국의 안전을 위해서가 아니라, 아시아 내에서 미국의 안전을 위해서
 - 기타 이유. 구체적으로 적어주세요: _____
 - 미군이 왜 한국에 있는지 모르겠다.
20. 통일 이후, 미군이 한국에서 해야 할 역할은 무엇입니까?
- 한국 국민을 돕기 위해 남아서 안전을 제공해야 한다.
 - 한국 군인을 훈련 한 후, 철수해야 한다.
 - 한국에 남지만, 그들의 기지 내에 제한되어야 한다.
 - 한국에 남지만, 주한 미국 지위 협정에 의한 특별 보호는 없어야 한다.
 - 기타 역할. 구체적으로 적어주세요: _____

마지막 질문

21. 다음 중 통일에 관한 당신의 감정을 가장 잘 표현한 것은 무엇입니까?
- 통일은 한국을 당연히 원래 그랬어야 하는 국가로 재건할 것입니다.
 - 통일은 한국에 매우 다른 상황을 야기할 것입니다.
 - 통일 이후에 무슨 일이 일어날지 예측할 방법은 없습니다.



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1800 K St. NW, Suite 1010 | Washington, DC 20006
T.202.464.1982 | F.202.464.1987 | www.keia.org