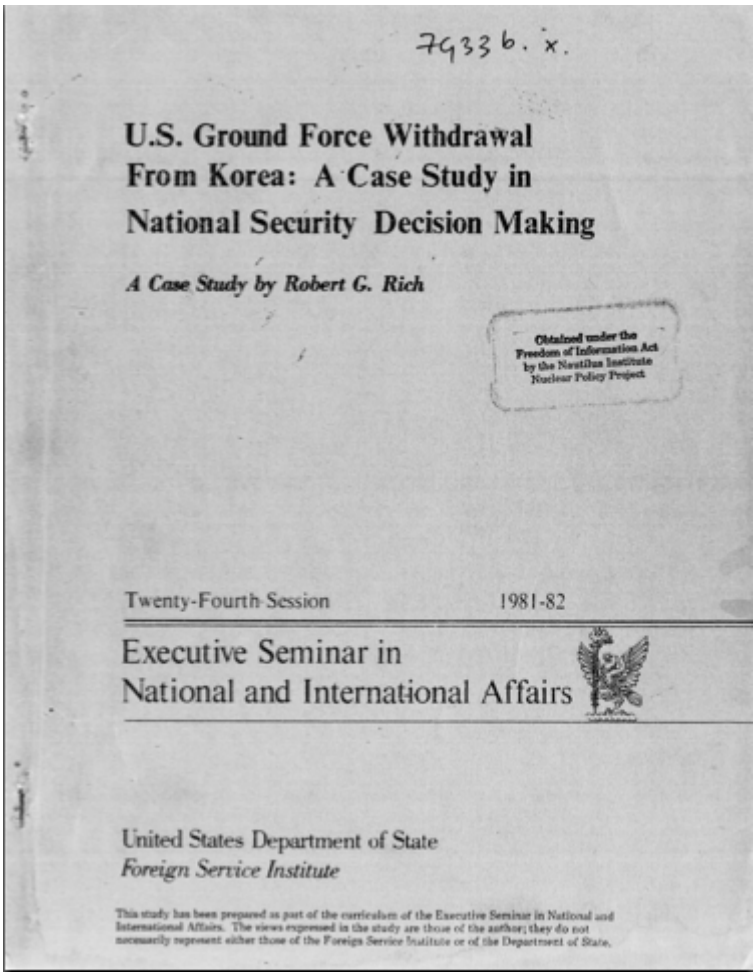
U.S. Ground Force Withdrawal From Korea: A Case Study in Nation Security Decision Making



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The need for stability on the Korean peninsula has long held a strategic importance focal to Washington's foreign policy calculus in Asia. As the most conceivable flashpoint for conflict in the

region, the U.S. has stationed nearly 30,000 troops in South Korea as the vanguard in the event of a possible confrontation with the North. In 1976, the post-Vietnam mood among the American populace and Washington policy makers strongly leaned toward the disengagement of U.S. commitment and troops to any possible conflict in Asia. During his 1976 presidential election campaign, candidate Jimmy Carter frequently called for the withdrawal of U.S. ground combat troops from Korea. With President Obama's proposed withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Afghanistan by 2014, and Washington's "pivot" in foreign policy focus from the Middle East to Asia, discourse on the merits and possible consequences of troop withdrawal or influx remains a salient topic especially in regards to U.S. strategic interests in hotspots like the Korean peninsula.

Robert G. Rich's 1982 case study presents an insider’s view (from the Korea Desk) on the bureaucratic stratagems used to reverse President Carter's proposed policy of withdrawing U.S. ground forces from Korea in the mid-seventies by examining decision-making processes and factors in regards to the forces, viewpoints, currents and countercurrents which ultimately affected policy stances and conclusions at different stages during this time.

Rich writes:

“The factors of the Korean withdrawal case are by no means unique. They illustrate problems of decision-making and analysis in the complex arena of foreign and security affairs within the political system of the American republic as it has evolved by the 1980's. A great many cross currents come into play. Motivations for policy become mixed, multiple justifications may indeed be self-contradictory, yet each relevant portion of the policy constituency holds onto its preferred goal and interpretation.”(page 3)

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