

## **Iraq nothing like S. Korea - Comparison by Bush is ignorant**

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In an attempt to justify the protracted stay of U.S. troops in Iraq, President Bush recently declared that the South Korean model will be emulated.

This idea once again shows the desperation and recklessness of the Bush administration, as well as its deplorable ignorance of political and historical reality. The differences between the two cases are so drastic that analogizing Iraq with Korea is absurd and untenable.

After the brutal Korea War (1950-3), which tallied nearly 55,000 U.S. soldiers killed in action and more than 100,000 wounded, it was necessary for U.S. forces to remain in Korea to protect our ally, South Korea, from Communist aggression. Then, in the ensuing decades, world politics was dominated by the Cold War, in which the Korean peninsula was one of the major front lines. We had a clearly defined enemy. By contrast, in Iraq, the definition of our enemy is impossibly vague, and there is no front line to defend. Our soldiers do not know where to aim their guns, yet hostile fire comes from all directions. Even more confusing is that the insurgents' primary target in their sectarian warfare may not even be our soldiers.

Our involvement in Korea was directly tied to an unambiguous security interest for the United States, and indeed for the rest of the free world, in containing the expansion of the Soviet bloc. With Saddam Hussein long out of power, and with the administration sensibly ruling out the notion of a religious war against Islam, we are still left with tough questions regarding what we are fighting for, and for whom. Iraqi freedom? Or our own oil interests? Are the oil fields the "front line" we are defending?

Most important, U.S. troops have enjoyed overwhelming support from not only the governments of South Korea but from the Korean people at large. They needed us, asked for our presence and supported our troops. In the process, South Korea has made remarkable strides as a democratic and effectively developing system.

Are our troops supported by the Iraqis? All indications are that the Nouri al-Maliki government wants our money more than our military or political presence. Can his government ever be loyal to the United States?

Even in South Korea, after three long years of massive destruction, great loss of American and Korean lives and our protracted stationing of troops for more than 50 years, we still do not have peace, let alone a victory. Since the armistice agreement (in actuality only a temporary cease-fire) in 1953, U.S. troops on the order of 30,000-35,000 soldiers have remained and will continue to remain in South Korea for an indefinite period of time. Thus, applying the South Korean model simply implies that our troops will stay in Iraq for decades, rather than years.

If preparing our citizens for a generation of occupation in Iraq was President Bush's intent, his analogy may indeed have been appropriate.

Now, more than ever, the administration should redirect its thinking to devising strategies for withdrawal.

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