This report analyzes the results of a February 1999 public opinion poll conducted jointly by the RAND Center for Asia-Pacific Policy and the Joong-Ang Ilbo, a leading South Korean daily newspaper. The poll was part of a larger project initiated in mid-1996 by RAND and funded by the Korea Foundation to examine changing South Korean attitudes toward long-term security and unification issues.

Modeled on previous work done at RAND on German public opinion following Germany's unification in 1990, the project is designed to begin building a database on Korean attitudes toward security by undertaking regular surveys prior to and after unification of the two Koreas. Specifically, the project has three objectives: to establish benchmarks concerning South Korean attitudes on long-term security issues in the aftermath of the Cold War; to provide insights into possible future directions in Korean security policies and early warning of potential problems in U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK) security relations; and to explore prospective regional and global roles of a unified Korea.

In pursuit of these objectives, an initial survey was conducted in September 1996. The second survey described in this report sought to build upon and extend the findings of the 1996 survey. Given the specific objectives of the project, both surveys focused primarily on long-term South Korean perspectives and concerns rather than on attitudes toward particular topical issues.

The September 1996 survey was conducted through personal interviews with 1,050 South Korean adults who were eligible voters. The February 1999 survey was scaled back to accommodate South
Korean exigencies stemming from the financial crisis and focused on a core set of security issues. This second poll was conducted by telephone with 713 eligible adult voters. The margin of error in both cases was plus or minus 3.2 percent.

For ease of reading purposes, polling data cited in the text are generally rounded up to the next whole integer, if 0.5 or higher, and down to the previous integer if 0.4 or lower.

This report should be of interest to scholars, students, and ordinary citizens seeking a better understanding of South Korean views on unification and security issues. It also should be of use to policymakers on both sides of the Pacific as they try to anticipate potential problems in U.S.-ROK security relations and both generate and maintain public support for their respective national policies.