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Korea Institute for National Unification

217, Banpo-daero, Seocho-gu, Seoul 06578, Republic of Korea

TEL: (82-2) 2023 8038

FAX: (82-2) 2023 8298

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CONTENTS

Feature Theme:

China's Role in North Korea's Future

China's Policies toward North Korea's Nuclear
and Missile Programs

Larry A. Nicksch 1

Russia's Reassessment of the Korean Peninsula

Gilbert Rozman 41

Chinese Attitudes toward Korean Unification

Bonnie S. Glaser and Yun Sun 71

First Mover Responses to North Korean Instability:
The Intervention-Legitimacy Paradox

Scott Snyder and Darcie Draudt 99

Unification Options and Scenarios:
Assisting A Resistance

David S. Maxwell 127

Contributors

Larry Nicksch received a B.A. degree from Butler University with a history major; a Master of Science in Foreign Service degree from Georgetown University; and a Ph.D degree in history from Georgetown University. Dr. Nicksch was a Specialist in Asian Affairs at the Congressional Research Service until his retirement in 2010. At CRS, he provided information and conducted research for Members of Congress and congressional committees on security and political issues related to U.S. relations with the countries of East Asia and the Western Pacific. He has authored many papers and articles on these issues and participated in numerous conferences. Dr. Nicksch currently is a Senior Associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and is involved in CSIS's Asia programs. Dr. Nicksch also is a fellow with the Institute for Corean-American Studies (ICAS). He has taught East Asian History at George Washington University and currently is teaching a graduate course in East Asian Security. He can be reached at lnicksch@gwu.edu.

Gilbert Rozman is the Emeritus Musgrave Professor of Sociology, Princeton University and is currently serving as editor-in-chief of *The Asan Forum*, a journal on international relations in the Asia-Pacific region. He specializes on Northeast Asia. Rozman majored in Chinese and Russian studies at Carleton College after a junior year in the Critical Languages Program at Princeton University. Returning to Princeton for graduate studies, he combined sociology with a focus on China, Japan, and Russia. Much later, he began Korean studies, spending semesters as a visiting professor at both Yonsei University and Seoul National University. His recent monographs and edited books include: *The Sino-Russian Challenge to the World Order: National Identities, Bilateral Relations, and East vs. West in the 2010s*; *Misunderstanding Asia: International Relations Theory and Asian Studies over Half a Century*; *Asia's Alliance Triangle: U.S.-Japan-South Korea Relations at a Tumultuous Time*; and *Asia's Slippery Slope: Triangular Tensions, Identity Gaps, Conflicting Regionalism, and Diplomatic Impasse toward North Korea*. He can be reached at grozman@princeton.edu.

Bonnie Glaser is a senior adviser for Asia in the Freeman Chair in China Studies, where she works on issues related to Chinese foreign policy and Asia-Pacific security. She is concomitantly a senior associate with CSIS Pacific Forum. From 2003 to mid-2008, Ms. Glaser was a senior associate in the CSIS International Security Program. Prior to joining CSIS, she served as a consultant for various U.S. government offices, including the Departments of Defense and State. Ms. Glaser's writings have been published in the *Washington Quarterly*, *China Quarterly*, *Asian Survey*, *International Security*, *Problems of Communism*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *American Foreign Policy Interests*, *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, *New York Times*, and *International Herald Tribune*, as well as various edited volumes. She is a regular contributor to the Pacific Forum quarterly Web journal *Comparative Connections*. Ms. Glaser is a board member of the U.S. Committee of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and a member of the International Institute of Strategic Studies. She served as a member of the Defense Department's Defense Policy Board China Panel in 1997. Ms. Glaser received her B.A. in political science from Boston University and her M.A. with concentrations in international economics and Chinese studies from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. She can be reached at BGlaser@csis.org.

Yun Sun is a senior associate with the East Asia Program at the Stimson Center. Her expertise is in Chinese foreign policy, U.S.-China relations and China's relations with neighboring countries and authoritarian regimes. From 2011 to early 2014, she was a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution, jointly appointed by the Foreign Policy Program and the Global Development Program, where she focused on Chinese national security decision-making processes and China-Africa relations. From 2008 to 2011, Yun was the China Analyst for the International Crisis Group based in Beijing, specializing on China's foreign policy towards conflict countries and the developing world. Prior to ICG, she worked on U.S.-Asia relations in Washington, DC for five years. Yun earned her master's

degree in international policy and practice from George Washington University, as well as an MA in Asia Pacific studies and a BA in international relations from Foreign Affairs College in Beijing. She can be reached at ysun@stimson.org.

Scott Snyder is senior fellow for Korea studies and director of the program on U.S.-Korea policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, where he had served as an adjunct fellow from 2008 to 2011. Mr. Snyder was a senior associate in the international relations program of The Asia Foundation, where he founded and directed the Center for U.S.-Korea Policy and served as The Asia Foundation's representative in Korea (2000-2004). He was also a senior associate at Pacific Forum CSIS. Mr. Snyder has worked as an Asia specialist in the research and studies program of the U.S. Institute of Peace and as acting director of Asia Society's contemporary affairs program. He was a Pantech visiting fellow at Stanford University's Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center during 2005 through 2006, and received an Abe fellowship, administered by the Social Sciences Research Council, in 1998 to 1999. Mr. Snyder's most recent publication (with co-author Brad Glosserman) is *The Japan-South Korea Identity Clash: East Asian Security and the United States*, Columbia University Press (2015). He can be reached at snydersas@gmail.com.

Darcie Draudt is research associate for Korea Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, DC. She also serves as assistant editor at *Sino-NK*, an online editorial dedicated to documenting and analyzing the borderland dynamics and transnational ties of Northeast Asia. Draudt has served as a field researcher for the International Organization for Migration Research and Training Center in Ilsan, South Korea in 2012, and as publishing and design manager for the *Yonsei Journal of International Studies* (2012-2013). Draudt received her MA in Korean studies from the Yonsei University Graduate School of International Studies in Seoul, South Korea, and her BA in anthropology from Davidson College in North Carolina. She can be reached at darciedraudt@gmail.com.

David S. Maxwell is the Associate Director of the Center for Security Studies in the School of Foreign Service of Georgetown University. He is a retired US Army Special Forces Colonel with command and staff assignments in Korea, Japan, Germany, the Philippines, and CONUS, and served as a member of the military faculty teaching national security at the National War College. He is a graduate of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, the Command and General Staff College, the School of Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth and the National War College, National Defense University. In addition, he is a fellow at the Institute of Corean-American Studies and on the Board of Directors for *Small Wars Journal*. He is a Life Member of the Special Forces Association and the National War College Alumni Association and is the editor of the *International Journal of Korean Studies*. He teaches "Unconventional Warfare and Special Operations for Policy Makers and Strategists." He can be reached at David.Maxwell@georgetown.edu.

China's Policies toward North Korea's Nuclear and Missile Programs

Larry A. Niksch

China's policies toward North Korea's nuclear and missile programs have been a significant problem for the United States, South Korea, and Japan since the onset of six-party talks in 2003. China's diplomatic strategy and tactics in six-party talks seldom supported U.S. negotiating positions. China officially supported denuclearization of North Korea; but its negotiating strategy was to influence the talks, especially the Bush administration, into accepting more limited objectives that would allow North Korea to retain secret components of a nuclear weapons program. China opened criticism of North Korea when Pyongyang began to test nuclear warheads, thus unveiling secrets of its program, and long-range missiles. However, China rejected placing overt pressure on North Korea. It acted only in limited ways to enforce United Nations sanctions against North Korea. It allowed North Korea access to Chinese territory and institutions that Pyongyang used to advance its nuclear and missile programs.

China has been motivated by core objectives of supporting political stability in North Korea and preserving North Korea as a buffer against South Korea and the United States. China is also motivated by its policy of building relations with Iran, a key partner of North Korea in developing nuclear warheads and long-range missiles.

These long-standing Chinese goals and strategies suggest that China will pursue similar strategies and tactics in dealing with future scenarios, such as a continuing of North Korean nuclear and missile testing, a de facto moratorium by North Korea on testing but no negotiations, and a resumption of six-party negotiations.

Keywords: freeze, sanctions, enabler, uranium, proliferation

China's Role in the North Korean Nuclear and Missile Issues

As North Korea expanded its nuclear and missile programs in the 1990s and 2000s, one of the most vexing problems faced by the United States, South Korea, and Japan in dealing with this challenge has been developing a strategy to influence China's policies toward Pyongyang programs. The broad objective of Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo has been to persuade China to adopt a policy toward North Korea under which Beijing would employ multiple tactics of diplomatic proposals, diplomatic support for U.S. proposals, economic incentives, and economic pressure to induce North Korea to agree to terminate the programs or at least limit them.

After many years, the results of these efforts have fallen below the expectations of Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo, especially the United States, which has taken the lead in approaching China. U.S. officials frequently state that cooperation with China is good but add that China could do more. But, overall, little has been accomplished to halt or even slow North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and longer-range missiles. Since March 2013, credible reports and statements have emerged that North Korea has crossed a key nuclear threshold: developing and likely by this time mounting nuclear warheads on its intermediate range Rodong missiles.¹ These warheads likely are the product of Pyongyang's expanding facilities (known and secret) to produce weapons-grade uranium (HEU). North Korea successfully tested a long-range missile in December 2012. U.S. experts believe that this test demonstrates North Korea's goal to produce a missile with a nuclear warhead that could reach the United States. Pyongyang, itself, substantiates this belief by boasting that this is the

1. See, for example, the NBC News report of April 3, 2013, by Richard Engel, the long-time senior national security correspondent of NBC News. Engel reported that U.S. officials told him that they believed that North Korea had developed nuclear warheads for missiles but that the missiles had a range of only 1,000 miles. The missile of that range would be the Rodong. Chris Nelson reported in the *Nelson Report* of May 5, 2013, that within the U.S. government, the likelihood that North Korea had developed nuclear warheads for the Rodongs "seems far more certain behind closed doors than in public."

prime goal of the missile program.

Experts state a litany of reasons why China has not done more to stop North Korea's programs. They cite China having a primary interest in political stability for the North Korean government, which supersedes Beijing's concerns over the nuclear and missile programs. Instability could bring about regime collapse and reunification of Korea under the South Korean (ROK) government. China is believed to oppose reunification under Seoul, fearing that it would lead to the stationing of U.S. troops in what is now North Korea, near the Chinese border. Some experts also surmise that the Chinese government fears a reunified Korea under a democratic government that could influence Chinese public opinion to demand more freedom inside China. A reunified Korea also could attract politically the large ethnic Korean populations inside Manchuria. China is said to fear that a regime collapse could result in tens of thousands of North Korean refugees pouring across the border into China. Thus, according to many experts, China wants to maintain North Korea and its regime as a buffer protecting China from all of these alleged dangers.²

This analysis of China's attitudes appears credible. Elements of these attitudes will be cited throughout this paper. However, it seems to me that this analysis does not give a complete picture of the motives behind China's policy toward North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. China's strategy and tactics toward the nuclear and missile issues have changed outwardly over the course of the last decade, especially in the six-party talks and, more recently, in bilateral relations with North Korea. What is the meaning of China's more critical attitudes toward North Korea? This paper will lay out the evidence that China has acted over the years as an enabler of North Korea's nuclear and missile program. Such an enabling role goes beyond an objective of regime stability for the Pyongyang government. If so, why? What issues and questions do all of this raise for China's future role, including China's role in any new six-party talks?

2. Victor Cha, *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp. 335-345.

Strategy and Tactics in Six-party Talks (2003-2008)

China reacted to the breakdown of the 1994 U.S.-North Korea [Nuclear] Agreed Framework in 2002 by taking the initiative to organize negotiations over the North Korean nuclear issue. China first offered to host U.S.-North Korea talks in January 2003; this evolved into six-party talks with China assuming the chairmanship of this group. Since then, China has been a consistent advocate of the six-party talks.

However, China's strategy and tactics in the six-party talks until the collapse in December 2008 is controversial. China relished its role of chairman of the talks; but Beijing was reluctant to use that role to make concrete proposals that would affect the North Korean nuclear program. China made two major proposals. It offered several drafts of a six-party statement in 2005 that eventually became the six-party statement of September 2005. But China did this only after North Korea had rejected a draft proposed by the United States — the Bush administration. China did take a unitary initiative when it issued a proposal in December 2008 reportedly on outside verification and inspections of North Korean nuclear facilities. The text of this has not been made public. Four of the six parties (United States, South Korea, Japan, and Russia) supported the Chinese proposal. North Korea rejected it, culminating in the collapse of the talks.

China, instead, pressured the Bush administration to make concrete proposals to North Korea. China advocated bilateral negotiations between the United States and North Korea. It even proposed that the United States establish diplomatic relations with North Korea.³ Beijing grew critical in late 2003 and early 2004 when the Bush administration rejected issuing proposals and even cursory contacts with North Korean officials at six-party meetings.

Beijing, however, did not hesitate to criticize U.S. proposals when the Bush administration did issue them. China's criticisms came following North Korea's rejection of the proposals. China first came out

3. Exclusive Interview with DPRK nuclear expert Li Dunqui, (in Chinese) *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao*, December 19, 2006.

against the 2004 Bush administration's proposal for "complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization," known as CVID.⁴ When the Bush administration did enter into bilateral talks with North Korea in 2005, China sharply criticized the U.S. proposal for a six-party statement because the U.S. proposal did contain a commitment to North Korea to revive the light water reactor project that had been established by the 1994 Agreed Framework. Pyongyang had demanded a new commitment in any six-party agreement. China reacted by presenting several draft agreements that stipulated a commitment to build a light water reactor. In offering these drafts, China imposed strong pressure on the Bush administration to accept a clause on light water reactors, reportedly including a threat to denounce the Bush administration if a six-party agreement collapsed. The Bush administration finally accepted a Chinese draft as the basis of the September 2005 six-party statement.⁵

At the onset of the six-party talks, China had stated that the goal of the negotiations was a denuclearization agreement with North Korea. However, in the talks, China indicated that it favored a more limited agreement similar to the Agreed Framework. This, in effect, was an alternative to the U.S. proposal for CVID. China thus showed a positive view of North Korea's proposal for a return to a "freeze" on its nuclear operations. Chinese officials argued that North Korea had a right to a "peaceful" nuclear program, including light water reactors.⁶ And, they said, the United States must address North Korea's "security concerns."

4. Nicholas Kravlev, "China: U.S. Urged to Be 'Flexible' toward North Korea," *Washington Times*, October 26, 2004.

5. Michael Hirsh and Melinda Liu, "North Korea Hold 'Em'," *Newsweek*, October 3, 2005.

6. "N. Korea Entitled to Nuclear Power under NPT-China," Reuters, September 1, 2005; Anne Wu, "Beijing's Stance on North Korea," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, February 18, 2005.

Collapse of the 2007 Six-party Agreements

Following North Korea's first nuclear test in October 2006, China endorsed (and apparently influenced) the Bush administration's decision to enter into bilateral negotiations with North Korea. China endorsed the agreement that came out of these talks, which became the six-party agreement of February 2007. Under this agreement and a supplemental accord of October 2007, the United States and North Korea each accepted two obligations. North was to allow a process of disablement of its plutonium nuclear facilities at Yongbyon and provide the other members of the six-party talks a "complete and correct" declaration of nuclear programs. The United States' two obligations were to remove North Korea from economic sanctions dating back to the Korean War and remove North Korea from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism.

However, the substantive Chinese tactic after these agreements was urgings and pressure on the Bush administration to soften North Korea's obligations, especially the requirement that North Korea provide a "complete and correct" declaration of nuclear programs. China focused particularly on North Korea's alleged highly enriched uranium program (which North Korea continued to deny) and Pyongyang's proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, highlighted by North Korea's involvement in Syria's construction of a nuclear reactor, which Israel bombed in September 2007.⁷ China argued that North Korea should not have to disclose these programs in a disclosure declaration. The Bush administration, China reportedly asserted, should concentrate on the North Korean plutonium program, especially implementation of the provisions in the agreements for the disablement of the Yongbyon facilities.

The Bush administration initially took a strong position that North Korea must disclose details of its uranium enrichment program and nuclear proliferation activities. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill said in February 2008 that: "The North Koreans promised not to

7. Cha, *The Impossible State*, pp. 247-249.

engage in nuclear proliferation. We want to make sure they follow through on their pledge."⁸ However, even then, China was pressuring the Bush administration to drop these two issues from the nuclear programs that North Korea would have to declare.⁹ By April, the Bush administration agreed with China's urgings. It offered no criticism when North Korea issued a declaration on June 26, 2008, that said nothing about uranium enrichment or proliferation programs. The administration also accepted North Korea's declaration omitting important details about the plutonium program, including the number of nuclear weapons North Korea possessed and information about the sites and facilities where North Korea produces, tests, and stores nuclear weapons. A "confidential minute" cited by the Bush administration reportedly contained only a North Korean acknowledgment of U.S. concerns over uranium enrichment and the Syrian reactor.¹⁰

After the February 2007 six-party agreement was concluded, North Korea declared that it would not implement its provisions until the Bush administration ended the U.S. sanctions against Banco Delta Asia, a bank in the Chinese territory of Macao. The Bush administration had imposed the sanction in November 2005 in order to deny North Korea access to an account containing USD 25 million. The Bush administration justified the sanctions on the money being procured by North Korea through illegal smuggling and counterfeiting activities. North Korea's "ultimatum" of 2007 was followed by public expressions by prominent Chinese that Washington should end the sanctions. Writing in *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*), the newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Li Dunqiu, Director of Korean Peninsular Studies at the Institute of World Development — under China's State Council — criticized the Banco Delta Asia sanctions as having caused North Korea's nuclear test and as part of a [U.S.] "process effecting a regime change in North Korea,

8. Nicholas Kravov, "U.S. Urges Monitoring Flow of Nuclear Materials," *Washington Times*, February 26, 2008.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Anne Gearan, "U.S. official: North Korea Has Agreed to Intensive US Verification of Its Plutonium Production," *Associated Press*, June 26, 2008.

which is the fundamental goal of the United States.”¹¹ These statements appeared to reflect the view of the Chinese government. In April 2007, the Bush administration relaxed the sanctions, and North Korea received the money.

China, however, was consistent, in pressing the Bush administration to implement fully its obligations under the 2007 agreements. Chinese officials put special emphasis on the U.S. commitment to remove North Korea from the U.S. official list of state sponsors of terrorism.¹² Despite the impasse over verification in late 2008, the Bush administration removed North Korea from the list (despite evidence that North Korea was providing arms and other assistance to the terrorist group, Hezbollah).

These apparent diplomatic victories for China evaporated quickly in the second half of 2008. Newly acquired evidence of North Korea’s uranium enrichment program caused the Bush administration to reverse its permissive policy and call for a more intrusive nuclear verification regime for North Korea. The U.S.-North Korean deadlock over verification led China to offer its own verification plan at the December 2008 six-party meeting. This plan had sufficient credibility that, as stated previously, the remaining six-party members except North Korea accepted China’s proposal.

China’s “diplomatic victories” in 2008 turned out to undermine a successful implementation of the February 2007 agreement. Particularly, China’s urging of non-inclusion of uranium enrichment in the North Korean declaration of nuclear programs contributed heavily to the emergence of the verification issue. If China had supported the Bush administration’s original position that information on uranium enrichment must be included in the declaration, North Korea would have come under much greater pressure to comply. Even if North Korea still refused, the deadlock would have been over a specifically-

11. Li Dunqiu, “Getting to the crux of the problem in the six-party talks” (in Chinese), *Renmin Ribao*, December 3, 2006.

12. “Envoy Urges Not to Dwell on Past N.K. Nuclear Acts,” Yonhap News Agency, February 13, 2008.

stated clause in the February 2007 agreement rather than about U.S. subsequent demands for verification.¹³

China's Rejection of the U.S. Claim of a North Korean Uranium Enrichment Program

China's position regarding the uranium enrichment issue in 2008 was an extension of a tactic that China had employed since the beginning of the six-party talks. China consistently questioned and, in effect, rejected the U.S. claim that North Korea had a secret program to produce enriched uranium for use in nuclear weapons. The Bush administration made several efforts to convince China of the credibility of its intelligence information that North Korea had such a secret program. Several high U.S. officials, including Vice President Cheney, visited China and showed Chinese officials classified U.S. intelligence information about a North Korean uranium enrichment program.¹⁴

Chinese officials stated that they did not find the U.S. claim convincing or that they had doubts that North Korea had such a program.¹⁵ Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, for example, answered a question from the press on uranium enrichment by feigning ignorance: "I think you know more than I do, or to put it another way, I don't know anything more than you do."¹⁶ Former U.S. officials, Richard Bush and Jim Steinberg, reportedly believed that China, in fact, knew about North Korea's uranium enrichment program.¹⁷

Nevertheless, U.S. officials played into the hands of China's rejec-

13. For more details about the six-party talks, see: Bruce E. Bechtol Jr., *Defiant Failed State: The North Korean threat to International Security* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books Inc., 2010), pp. 71-100.

14. Adam Entous and Brian Rhoads, "Cheney Presses China on N.Korea, Gets Pressed on Taiwan," Reuters, April 14, 2004.

15. Joseph Kahn and Susan Chira, "Chinese Official Challenges U.S. Stance on North Korea," *New York Times*, June 9, 2004. Statement by Deputy Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong.

16. "Text of FM Li Zhaoxing's News Conference on March 6 During NPC Session," Xinhua, March 6, 2005.

17. Christopher Nelson, *The Nelson Report*, newsletter, January 15, 2004.

tion tactic in early 2007 when Assistant Secretary Christopher Hill and other officials voiced their own skepticism over whether North Korea was continuing a uranium enrichment program. More fundamentally, China's rejection tactic and position on uranium enrichment in 2008 reflected the long-standing Chinese view that nuclear agreements with North Korea should be limited in scope and should concentrate on the plutonium program.

China's rejection tactic has proven to be a fatal blow since North Korea admitted to a uranium enrichment program in 2009, showed a sophisticated uranium enrichment plant in 2010 to U.S. nuclear scientist, Siegfried Hecker, and probably tested a uranium warhead in 2013. Ironically, in February 2015, Chinese nuclear experts told Hecker and other U.S. experts that North Korea had about 20 uranium warheads with a major production capacity to produce another eight to ten uranium warheads annually.¹⁸

Pressure versus Inducements: the China-U.S. Disagreement

Early in the six-party talks, China and United States developed a strong disagreement over how to influence North Korea to adopt constructive actions on the nuclear issue. The disagreement was heightened by North Korea's two lengthy boycotts of the negotiations in the 2004-2006 period. The United States emphasized that China had the means to apply coercive pressure on the North Korea government to modify its behavior. U.S. officials advocated to Chinese officials that China should cut off oil shipments to North Korea. China had maintained oil shipments to North Korea at about 500,000 tons annually, not a huge amount but sufficient to enable Pyongyang to meet minimal energy needs, including the needs of its military. The Chinese government, however, rejected any prolonged suspension of oil shipments.

Here, China's fear of instability in North Korea apparently came into play. Moreover, while this disagreement went on, Chinese officials

18. *Washington Post* Editorial Board, "The Danger Next Door," *Washington Post*, May 11, 2015; Ankit Panda, "Chinese Experts Sound Alarms on North Korea's Nuclear Program," *The Diplomat*, April 23, 2015.

and experts repeatedly criticized the Bush administration for statements suggesting that there should be “regime change” in North Korea. Chinese officials took particular offense over the report that U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had circulated a memorandum proposing that the United States join with China to isolate and bring about the collapse of the Pyongyang regime.¹⁹ These Chinese suggested that “regime change” was the real Bush administration motive for its advocacy of a Chinese cutoff of oil. Chinese experts called on the United States to provide assurances to North Korea that it did not seek to overthrow the North Korean government.²⁰

China's approach to North Korea's bad conduct was just the opposite: offering North Korea financial and economic inducements for better behavior, including ending the boycotts. During the boycotts, China sent several high-level delegations to North Korea which offered lucrative aid programs. North Korea's initial decision in 2003 to join six-party talks was “rewarded” by USD 50 million in grant aid from China in late 2003. Over the next 2 1/2 years, China reportedly provided over USD 2 billion in aid and investments for North Korean port facilities, energy plants, and a USD 24 million “friendship” glass factory. One U.S. diplomat described this as a “massive carrot-giving operation.”²¹

China and United Nations Sanctions

Following North Korea's nuclear and missile tests in 2006, 2009, and 2012-2013, the United Nations Security Council approved measures

19. Samuel S. Kim, “China and the US-DPRK Nuclear Standoff.” Paper presented at an ICKS conference, Seoul, August 5-6, 2005.

20. Howard W. French, “Doubting U.S., China Is Wary of Korea Role,” *New York Times*, February 19, 2005.

21. Robert Marquand, “China Changes Game in N. Korea,” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 1, 2006; “China to Provide \$2 Billion in Economic Aid to DPRK,” Yonhap News Agency, October 30, 2005; “Bribing Pyongyang,” *Asian Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 2004.

applying sanctions against North Korea that increased in scope with each new measure. China supported these moves, although in negotiations in the Security Council, Beijing succeeded in softening some provisions against North Korea. The UN resolutions prohibit UN member states from exporting military equipment and technology to North Korea that Pyongyang could use in the development of nuclear weapons and missiles. They prohibit North Korea from exporting nuclear weapons, missiles, and related technology to other countries. The later resolutions call on UN member countries to search ships and aircrafts believed to be carrying weapons or materials and technology bound for North Korea that Pyongyang could use in a nuclear weapons program. UN member countries are called upon to prevent their banks from providing accounts or other assistance to North Korean entities that use these banks to transmit funds related to North Korea's proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Finally, the resolutions ban UN member countries from exporting "luxury goods" to North Korea.

It is generally accepted that the Chinese government has followed a minimal policy toward enforcement of the sanctions. A Congressional Research Service (CRS) memorandum of October 10, 2010, summarized the common view. The memorandum, addressed to Senator Richard Lugar, stated that North Korea evades UN sanctions by routing "trade and financial transactions through friendly countries, most notably China."²²

China did announce a ban on the export to North Korea of several technologies that could be used to develop nuclear weapons and chemical and biological items.²³ In a highly publicized case in July 2009, Chinese border police on the China-North Korea border seized 70 kilograms of the strategic metal vanadium, often used in the produc-

22. CRS Memorandum to Senator Richard Lugar, October 8, 2010. My former colleagues at CRS prepared this memorandum nine months after I retired from CRS. The memorandum was made public by Bruce Klingner of the Heritage Foundation and by the Nelson Report.

23. Christopher Nelson, *The Nelson Report*, newsletter, September 25, 2013.

tion of missiles.²⁴ In another well-publicized case, the government-operated Bank of China closed the accounts of the Foreign Trade Bank of North Korea and suspended all financial transactions with the North Korean bank. The U.S. Treasury Department previously had imposed sanctions on the Foreign Trade Bank of North Korea and had urged the Chinese government to take similar action.²⁵

These singular actions, however, did not represent a broad, systematic policy to enforce UN sanctions. Chinese officials made clear that China would not act assertively in three main areas of the sanctions. Chinese officials questioned the ban on exports of "luxury goods" to North Korea. They argued that the language of the UN Security Council resolutions did not define "luxury goods." Therefore, as China's United Nations Ambassador, Wang Guangya, stated in 2006: "Luxury goods can mean many things for different people."²⁶ Ambassador Wang's words translated into inaction. In 2013, members of South Korea's Saenuri Party in the ROK National Assembly released figures that North Korea's imports of luxury goods from China in 2012 were valued at USD 585 million, compared to USD 323 million of luxury goods in 2009. Imports from China in 2012 included expensive cars (Mercedes), television sets, computers, liquor, watches, perfume, cosmetics, and furs. A South Korean National Assembly Member commented that the import of these goods in 2012 would have given North Korea the ability to import 1.96 million tons of wheat to alleviate its chronic food shortages.²⁷ The CRS memorandum to Senator Lugar stated succinctly that China "was not enforcing sanctions on luxury goods."

China secondly opposed any international effort to sanction banks

24. Lucy Hornby and Benjamin Kang Lim, "China Seizes Smuggled Metal bound for North Korea," Reuters, July 28, 2009.

25. "Cutting Banks' Ties, China Ups the Pressure on N. Korea," *Washington Post*, May 8, 2013.

26. Neil King Jr., "U.S. Seeks Asian Support on Squeezing Pyongyang," *Wall Street Journal Asia*, October 16, 2006.

27. "N. Korea Jacks Up Imports of Luxury Goods under New Leader," *Dong-A Ilbo*, October 4, 2013.

that allowed access to accounts by North Korean banks and trading companies. Despite the highly-publicized action of the Bank of China against the Foreign Trade Bank of North Korea, North Korean entities continued to use numerous smaller Chinese banks for financial transactions, including transactions related to the proliferation of missiles and nuclear technology. The *South China Morning Post* reported on March 14, 2013, that North Korea had many accounts in Chinese banks and in Chinese branches of foreign banks, in Shanghai and other cities. The amount of money in these accounts was hundreds of millions of dollars. The North Koreans reportedly developed ways to hide their identities in these banks, including using Chinese middlemen to open accounts in their name.²⁸

After North Korea's successful test of a long-range missile in December 2012, the Obama administration pressed in UN Security Council deliberations for new sanctions against banks that dealt with North Korea. China reportedly opposed the U.S. proposal, apparently fearing that the United Nations would sanction Chinese banks.²⁹ After the Security Council passed the 2013 round of sanctions, *The Economist* reported that China's "commitment to enforcing the sanctions seems half-hearted, and it appears to have insisted that Shanghai accounts in two of its biggest banks, holding hundreds of millions of dollars on behalf of Mr. Kim and his cronies, be excluded from the sanctions."³⁰ The *South China Morning Post* report of March 14, 2013, quoted Professor Du Jifeng of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences that international pressure on China to freeze North Korean bank accounts in China "would create a dilemma for China's leaders."

China's third opposition to UN sanctions came in the form of

28. "Kim Jong-un's Secret Billions," *Chosun Ilbo*, March 12, 2013; Michael Green, "China's Evolution on North Korea," *Joongang Daily*, August 6, 2013. Mike Green is the former Director for East Asia in the U.S. National Security Council under President George Bush. The *South China Morning Post* article was reported in *Chosun Ilbo*, March 14, 2013; See also: Ahn Sung-kyoo, "North Money Laundering Done in Guangdong," *Joongang Daily*, June 15, 2013.

29. Christopher Nelson, *The Nelson Report*, newsletter, January 22, 2013.

30. "Korean Roulette," *The Economist*, April 6, 2013.

objection to the UN resolutions' call for UN member states to search vehicles carrying North Korean cargoes that pass through their territories and territorial waters. Chinese Ambassador Wang Guangya stated after the Security Council approved the first sanctions resolution in October 2006 that China found the provision allowing the boarding of ships to inspect cargo unacceptable.³¹ Chinese officials later stated that the Chinese government would not search vessels passing through its waters and ports unless it had "sufficient evidence" that the ships contained North Korean goods illegal under UN sanctions.³² In fact, since 2006, there have been few reported Chinese searches of vessels that had come from or were bound to North Korea. The CRS memorandum to Senator Lugar declared that "North Korea continues to use air and land routes through China with little risk of inspection."

Chinese officials said nothing about the issue of North Korea-related air traffic passing through Chinese airspace and/or airports. This silence appears to have been no accident, as I will discuss in the next section.

China's Enabling of North Korean Nuclear and Missile Programs and Proliferation

There is little open discussion of China's role as an active enabler of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs as well as North Korea's proliferation of weapons and technology to other countries, particularly in the Middle East. The U.S. administrations of Bush and Obama, in particular, have been unwilling to issue public information about Chinese enabling activities. This has been part of a tactic of refusing to disclose information on North Korea's own nuclear proliferation — sometimes by denying that North Korea is proliferating nuclear

31. "U.S. Seeks Asian Support on Squeezing Pyongyang," *Wall Street Journal Asia*, October 16, 2006.

32. "Inspection of N. Korean Vessels 'Complex and Sensitive' Issue: China," *Kyodo News*, June 23, 2009.

weapons technology — and only limited disclosures of information about missile proliferation.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that there is much credible information that China has been an active enabler. Scholars Joe Bosco of Georgetown University and Claudia Rossett of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies have written and spoken about this. Moreover, such a role would explain much about China's diplomacy in the six-party talks and the lack of a major effort to enforce United Nations sanctions.

The Namchongang Trading Company in China

In October 2010, the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), in Washington, D.C., published a major study, "Taking Stock: North Korea's Uranium Enrichment Program." The report came one month before North Korean officials displayed to U.S. nuclear expert, Siegfried Hecker, a sophisticated uranium enrichment facility at Yongbyon. The report detailed North Korea's program to create facilities with machines called centrifuges that could produce enriched uranium, including highly enriched uranium that could be used in nuclear warheads. It described North Korea's long collaboration with Pakistan's nuclear tsar, A.Q. Khan, in the 1990s and early 2000s to develop centrifuge installations. North Korea, the report stated, received from Khan about 25 centrifuges and related equipment. The report noted that after 2002, U.S. intelligence information about Pyongyang's uranium enrichment program dwindled. This led, the report noted, to the doubts expressed by U.S. officials about the continuation of the program in 2007.

The installation shown to Hecker a month after the report erased any doubts that North Korea had succeeded in creating a viable uranium enrichment infrastructure. A question became: How did North Korea do it? The ISIS, itself, provided a big part of the answer. It discussed at length the activities of the Namchongang Trading Company, a North Korean entity described by the report as subordinate to North Korea's Bureau of Atomic Energy. It was directed

from Pyongyang by Jun Byung-ho, a member of North Korea's supreme National Defense Commission and apparently in charge of the uranium enrichment program. Namchongang set up its main office in Beijing's main business district in the early 2000s. Namchongang's head official in China, Yun Ho-jin, set up a concealed branch of Namchongang named after China's Shenyang Aircraft Corporation in Dandong, China, on North Korea's border.

The ISIS report asserted that North Korea used its "nuclear smuggling networks" to procure nuclear and nuclear dual-use goods that appeared to be for construction of Pakistani-style centrifuges. The report's description of Namchongang made it clear that ISIS concluded that the trading company was a central part of this network. Its operation in China gave it a special advantage in procuring nuclear-related components and materials from Chinese companies and European firms. In 2003, Namchongang attempted to purchase 220 tons of aluminum tubes through a German company — enough tubes for 4,000 centrifuges. In a subsequent investigation by the International Atomic Energy Agency, Namchongang officials contended that it was purchasing the aluminum tubes for a Chinese company; the Chinese company denied that it had ordered the tubes.³³ The ISIS report described Namchongang's operations as involving the purchase of goods from subsidiaries of foreign firms in China or domestic Chinese firms, which in turn procured goods from foreign companies outside China. In this way, Namchongang and North Korea could conceal their hand behind these procurements.

The ISIS report cited European intelligence officials that from 2007 on, Namchongang procured goods likely for the uranium enrichment program. Western intelligence agencies gained information on these procurements. The procurements included computer-controlled machines used to manufacture centrifuge parts and operate a centrifuge plant, spare parts for centrifuge equipment, and components for use in assembling centrifuges. The report concluded that the

33. See also: Robin Wright and Joby Warrick, "Purchases Linked North Korean to Syria, Officials Say," *Washington Post*, May 13, 2008.

known North Korean procurements during the 2007-2009 period indicated that North Korea “has the capability of building at the very least, a pilot plant” but short of a plant with 3,000 centrifuges.

Another major mission of Namchongang in China was to procure components and materials for shipment to Syria for use in the construction of Syria’s nuclear reactor, which the Israelis bombed in September 2007. The *Washington Post* in May 2008 quoted U.S. and European intelligence and diplomatic officials that Namchongang “provided the critical link between Pyongyang and Damascus, acquiring key materials from vendors in China and probably from Europe, and secretly transferring them to a desert construction site near the Syrian town of Al Kibar.” The head of ISIS, David Albright, was quoted by the *Washington Post* that Namchongang acted “as a trading agent or middleman, buying items through Chinese trading companies or directly from foreign companies.”³⁴

The uranium enrichment facility with 2,000 centrifuges shown to Dr. Hecker one month later revealed that North Korea had advanced its uranium enrichment program beyond a pilot plant. It seems certain that the Namchongang Trading Company was continuing to procure between the 2003 procurement of aluminum tubes and the 2007-2009 procurements.

The ISIS report concluded that “NCG thrived in China.” It stated that Namchongang likely was continuing to operate in China possibly with a different name, especially since UN Security Council resolutions had sanctioned the company. The report stated that the ISIS had no evidence that the Chinese government “is secretly approving” North Korea’s use of China to acquire materials from abroad for the uranium enrichment program, but that the Chinese government needed to give greater priority to stopping these North Korean activities.

Nevertheless, it seems to me naïve to believe that the Chinese government did not know about Namchongang’s mission. The company operated in Beijing for at least a decade “under the nose” of the Chinese government. Using the Shenyang Aircraft Corporation’s name

34. Ibid.

illegally was blatantly transparent and no doubt known to Chinese intelligence and police officials. The Chinese government's non-interference with Namchongang may have been passive, but it still fits the definition of an active enabler of North Korea's uranium enrichment program.

China's role is unacceptable when one considers China's tactics in the six-party talks as described previously: questioning and criticizing the U.S. claim that North Korea had a secret uranium enrichment program and in 2007 and 2008 pressuring the Bush administration to give up the requirement that North Korea disclose information about the uranium enrichment program in the disclosure statement required by the 2007 six-party agreement.

Enabling of North Korea's Proliferation: the Iran Connection

American officials of both the Bush and Obama administrations have said much about North Korea's nuclear and missile programs over the years; but they have been silent about the "rest of the story": North Korea's collaboration with Iran in developing nuclear weapons and missiles and China's role in enabling this collaboration. But the story of China's role is important in order to understand a key motive behind China's policy toward North Korea. And it is important because of the importance to both North Korea and Iran of their collaboration with each other.

I first began to examine the North Korean-Iranian relationship in the mid-2000s while I still was with the Congressional Research Service. In 2007, I authored a CRS Report entitled "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Development and Diplomacy." I included in the report a section entitled "Nuclear Collaboration with Iran and Syria." I included much information reported and attributed to intelligence agencies and defense ministries, but nearly all of these sources were foreign: German intelligence and defense ministry sources, European intelligence and defense officials, "western" intelligence sources, and Israeli officials and intelligence sources. A key *Los Angeles Times* featured article cited a former Iranian intelligence officer as a key source.

Other reports were based on statements by high-level Iranian and North Korean defectors. Nothing came from U.S. government sources, especially after 1995.

Nevertheless, the non-U.S. information has been extensive. More information has come after 2010 when I retired from the Congressional Research Service. The information has documented a North Korean-Iranian relationship that began to grow after North Korea first successfully tested the Rodong intermediate range missile in 1993. From this, North Korea began to provide Iran with Rodongs and sent experts to Iran to help Iran develop indigenous production facilities for missiles with Rodong components, including the Shahab-3, the twin of the Rodong. Missile cooperation expanded into full-scale nuclear cooperation by the late 1990s or shortly after 2000. An active program to jointly develop nuclear warheads was first reported in 2003. The program reportedly gave first priority to developing warheads for the Shahab-3 (and of course, for the Rodong). Subsequent reports described North Korea sending missile and nuclear technicians to Iran to train and work with Iranian counterparts. The German newspaper, *Der Spiegel*, published a lengthy article in November 2009 describing Iran's involvement with North Korea in the Syrian nuclear reactor bombed by Israel. *Der Spiegel* detailed that U.S. and Israeli intelligence agencies received information about the reactor from a high level Iranian defector.³⁵

The reports also cited Iranian payments of large sums of money — hundreds of millions of dollars — to North Korea for this assistance. Reports indicate that North Korea receives USD 1.5-2.0 billion or more annually from Iran for its multi-faceted collaboration.³⁶ The reality is that Iranian money is an important part of the North Korean govern-

35. Erich Follath and Holger Stark, "The Story of Operation Orchard: How Israel Destroyed Syria's Al Kibar Nuclear Reactor," *Spiegel Online*, November 2, 2009.

36. See, for, example, "Iran 'Paid Millions for Ringside Seat at N. Korean Nuke Test'," *Chosun Ilbo*, February 18, 2013. *Chosun Ilbo* cited an earlier Kyodo News Agency report detailing Iran arranging payment to North Korea through the Bank of Kuniun in Beijing.

ment's strategy to finance the nuclear and missile programs and to subsidize the North Korean leadership and elite in order to maintain the regime.

In "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Development and Diplomacy," I documented reports of Israeli government concerns over North Korean-Iranian collaboration. These included reports that Israeli officials voiced this concern to Bush administration officials and to prominent visiting Americans, such as former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

With the beginnings of North Korea's nuclear tests and long-range missile tests, reports came from various sources that Iran had sent high level delegations to observe these tests and undoubtedly receive all the data from these tests.³⁷

After 2010, much of the information has indicated that the collaboration has expanded in scope. Iran and North Korea publicly signed a technical cooperation agreement in September 2012, which drew attention from other governments. At the signing ceremony, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, stated that Iran and North Korea have "common enemies" and have established an "anti-hegemonic front."³⁸ Other reports alleged that Tehran and Pyongyang had signed a secret agreement in April 2012 for increased cooperation on "strategic projects."³⁹

A significant change was in the direction of the collaboration. Previously, the flow of missile components, missile and nuclear technology, and technicians and scientists had been from North Korea to Iran except for Iranians observing North Korean tests. After the 2012 agreements, a second flow of nuclear and missile experts and technicians from Iran to North Korea emerged. Credible reports emerged in 2012 that Iran sent missile experts to North Korea to assist the North

37. See Larry A. Niksch, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Development and Diplomacy and Development." CRS Report for Congress, January 5, 2010.

38. Ali Akbar Dareini, "Iran, North Korea Sign Technology Agreement," Associated Press, September 2, 2012.

39. "North Korea, Iran Agree to Deepen Strategic Ties: Insider," Kyodo News, July 23, 2012.

Koreans in preparing for the December 2012 test of the long-range missile.⁴⁰ When North Korea tested a nuclear device in 2013, other reports described high-level Iranian nuclear officials visiting North Korea to observe the test.⁴¹ An Iranian opposition exile group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran, issued a report in May 2015 detailing visits by high level North Korean delegations to Iran in 2015, including North Korean nuclear and missile experts.⁴²

Where does China Fit in to the Story of Growing North Korea-Iran Nuclear and Missile Collaboration?

Just ask yourself: How were missile components transferred from North Korea to Iran? How were nuclear and missile experts from both countries able to travel thousands of miles back and forth between Pyongyang and Tehran? A look at a map provides part of the answer — across hundreds of miles of Chinese air space. And, as the evidence shows, use of Chinese airports to refuel and sometimes to transfer components, people, and probably money between the North Korean and Iranian aircraft. And, as described previously, the role of the Namchongang Trading Company in China in procuring components and shipping them from China to Syria for use in the Iran-assisted Syrian nuclear reactor. Other reports describe a clandestine network of shipping by sea that North Korea has developed to ship missile components and other weapons to Iran. North Korea uses multiple Chinese ports (Dalian in Manchuria, Shanghai, Hong Kong) to load

40. "Iran to Observe North Korea Missile Test," United Press International, December 7, 2012; Bill Gertz, "Iran-North Missile Cooperation Undermines Recent Geneva Nuclear Deal," *Washington Free Beacon*, November 27, 2013.

41. "N.Korea's Nuke Test 'Funded by Iran'," *Chosun Ilbo*, February 20, 2013. *Chosun Ilbo* cited reports by the *London Sunday Times*, *WorldTribune.com*, and the Kyodo News Agency about Iran financing the February 2013 nuclear test and sending a high level delegation to observe it.

42. John Irish, "North Korean Nuclear, Missile Experts Visit Iran-Dissidents," *Reuters*, May 28, 2015.

and load again shipments of weapons aboard different ships to enhance concealment and avoid detection. Ships carrying the concealed arms leave Chinese ports ultimately bound for Iran or Syria.⁴³

Even as six-party talks began in 2003, the Bush administration reportedly began to complain to the Chinese government about North Korean airplanes flying over Chinese airspace to Iran to deliver missiles, missile components, and other weapons. In 2004, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (established by the U.S. Congress in 2000) issued a report claiming that China "continues to permit North Korea to use its air, rail and seaports to transship ballistic missiles and WMD-related materials."⁴⁴

These early U.S. complaints had no effect. Then, in 2007, the Bush administration saw over ten open transfers of large crates of apparent North Korean missile parts from North Korean aircraft to Iranian aircraft at the Beijing airport. Classified U.S. documents released by Wikileaks disclosed that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice instructed the U.S. Ambassador to China to press China to block "the transshipment of ballistic missile parts between North Korea and Iran via Beijing." A cable from Rice to the U.S. Embassy on November 3, 2007, said that the Chinese government should "make Beijing airport a less hospitable transfer point."⁴⁵

There is no evidence that China has taken any action to prevent the traffic between Pyongyang and Tehran. In July 2009, the State

43. Council on Foreign Relations, North Korea-Iran Nuclear Cooperation. Interview with Jeffrey Lewis, Director of the East Asian Non-Proliferation Program at the James Martin Center for Non-Proliferation Studies; John Park, "The Iran Secret: Explaining North Korea's Rocket Success," *The Diplomat*, December 25, 2012; "How N.Korea Goes about Exporting Arms," *Chosun Ilbo*, March 10, 2010.

44. "U.S. Nuclear Inquiry Finds China-Iran Link," Reuters, June 15, 2004; John J. Tkacik Jr., "Decision Day Looms over North Korea," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 2003.

45. Simon Tisdall, "China Pressed over Iran and North Korea's Nuclear Trade," *The Guardian (London)*, November 28, 2010; Michael Forsythe and Peter S. Green, "China's Defense of North Korean Ally Risks Alienating Top Trading Partners," *Bloomberg News*, November 29, 2010.

Department arranged for a briefing by “two senior administration officials” on North Korea. The officials disclosed that “with respect to China,” U.S. officials had “discussed” U.S. “concerns we have about how North Korea might engage in activities that violate [UN Resolution] 1874 — shipments over land, shipments by air, shipments by sea.” The officials stated an “impression” that the Chinese “understand each of these elements.” They did not state that the Chinese had given any commitment to stop the transshipments.⁴⁶

Several months after the State Department briefing, North Korea shipped to Iran by sea a large quantities of arms. The shipment passed through two Chinese ports, Dalian and Shanghai where the cargo was transferred to two different ships. The cargo was finally intercepted in the United Arab Emirates. There apparently was no effort by Chinese authorities to inspect the cargo.⁴⁷ In November 2010, the Government of Thailand intercepted a North Korean-chartered transport aircraft that contained 35 tons of North Korean weapons. The Thai government later notified the United Nations that the weapons were bound for Iran. Notably, the aircraft flew over 1,000 miles of Chinese air space without any attempt by the Chinese government and military to force it to land and be inspected.

Additional evidence of Chinese inaction came in the form of a report from UN experts to the UN Security Council about the performance of countries in enforcing UN sanctions against North Korea. The confidential report, leaked to the press in May 2011, asserted that North Korea and Iran were “suspected” of exchanging missile technology, missiles, and arms. The report referred to exchanges of scientists and technicians, exchange of data, and reciprocal participation in tests and analysis of results. The report alluded to transshipments through a “neighboring third country.” The main vehicles were aircraft from North Korea’s Air Koryo and Iran Air. Several UN diplomats said the third country was China. Analysts who saw this information

46. U.S. Department of State, Background Briefing on North Korea, July 15, 2009.

47. “Iran Bought Masses of N Korean Arms,” *Chosun Ilbo Online*, December 4, 2009.

unanimously concluded that the “third country” was China.⁴⁸ The report was leaked after China reportedly blocked a public release.

In February 2013, Japan's Kyodo News Agency reported that the Iranian government had paid North Korea “tens of millions of U.S. dollars” in order to send a high level delegation of Iranian nuclear experts to North Korea to observe Pyongyang's nuclear test. Kyodo quoted “a western diplomatic source” that Iran transferred the money to North Korea through the Bank of Kunlun, a Chinese bank in Beijing.⁴⁹

A key question is the influence of the Iran connection on China's motives in its policies toward North Korea. It seems to me that the Iran connection creates an important Chinese motive that goes beyond the motives cited earlier to keep North Korea stable as a buffer between China and the U.S.-South Korea alliance. Chinese foreign policy since the early 2000s has been to deepen Chinese relations with Iran. China imports large quantities of oil from Iran. Before the United Nations imposed sanctions on Iran, China's state-owned oil companies had committed over billions of dollars in investment in Iran's oil industry. Even before the conclusion of the Iran nuclear agreement in July 2015, Iranian and Chinese oil officials began meeting undoubtedly to reopen these investments.⁵⁰ China has become Iran's largest trade partner — USD 45 billion in 2013 — and source of foreign investment — over USD 250 million since 2000.⁵¹ Projections have trade reaching USD 160 billion by 2024.

China's President Xi Jinping has met several times with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. Iran has become a “founding member” of China's new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. President Xi has

48. Louis Charbonneau, “N.Korea, Iran Trade Missile Technology — U.N.,” Reuters, May 14, 2011; James Carafano and Owen Graham, “While North Korea and Iran Collaborate, China Covers Up,” *The Daily Caller*, May 23, 2011.

49. The Kyodo report was described in “Iran ‘Paid Millions for Ringside Seat at N. Korean Nuke Test,’” *Chosun Ilbo*, February 18, 2013.

50. Shannon Tiezzi, “China's Already Preparing for a Post-Sanctions Iran,” *The Diplomat*, April 8, 2015.

51. “China-Iran Relations,” *Wikipedia*, last modified August 6, 2015, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China-Iran_relations.

invited Iran to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a continental security organization proposed by China.⁵² The conclusion of the Iran nuclear deal increases the likelihood that Iran will join the Shanghai group. Military relations are growing. China is providing support for Iran's missile program. The defense ministers met in 2014 and declared that Iran and China have "common views over many important political, security, regional, and international issues."⁵³

In short, China's growing stake in building its relationship with Iran has created another important motive for China not to interfere substantively in North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. China has perceived firsthand the major role Iran now has in North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. China no doubt believes that its non-interference is a factor in building its ties with Iran and that any change of policy toward interference would damage its strategy toward Iran. And it seems that this non-interference continues to apply to North Korean-Iranian use of Chinese territory and Chinese banks to advance their collaboration. With the conclusion of the Iran nuclear deal and the prospective lifting of UN sanctions on Iran, China will have even more incentive to continuing its policy of non-interference in the North Korean-Iranian nuclear and missile collaboration.

China's Growing Criticism of North Korea: What Does It Mean?

Since 2005, China has enunciated criticisms of North Korea over its nuclear and missile programs. These criticisms have come from government officials, government and Communist Party-controlled media organs, and individual Chinese experts on North Korea situated in research organizations and universities. Recently, several prominent

52. Tiezzi, "China's Already Preparing for a Post-Sanctions Iran."

53. U.S. Center for Naval Analysis, *A Closer Look at China-Iran: Roundtable Report*, September 2010; Adam Kredo, "Iran, China expand military ties," *Washington Free Beacon*, May 5, 2014.

“retired” Chinese officials have issued pointed criticisms of North Korea. There also has emerged broader criticism of North Korea from elements of the Chinese public. The Chinese internet and “social media” have contained sharp criticisms of North Korea from thousands of individual Chinese.

There are three elements of this criticism worth noting. One is that the focus of the government’s criticism has been on North Korea’s nuclear and missile tests. Government officials have called for North Korean leader Kim Jong-un (and previously his father, Kim Jong-il) to halt further nuclear and missile tests. They have accused North Korea of exacerbating tensions in the Korean Peninsula.⁵⁴ Since the February 2013 nuclear test, China has instituted a diplomatic shunning of the North Korean regime. Diplomatic contacts reportedly have been reduced in number and in the level of contacts. Most important, Xi Jinping has not invited Kim Jong-un to visit China. There are reports that Xi has demanded as a condition for a visit that Kim pledge that he will order no further nuclear tests.

Some Chinese not directly in the government have gone further in their criticisms. A few experts and advisers to the government and larger numbers of Chinese over the social media have advocated that China end its support for North Korea and terminate the China-North Korea mutual defense treaty.⁵⁵ Zhang Lianqui, a Korean expert at the Central Party School of the Communist Party of China, called on China to act strongly to block North Korea’s goal of obtaining nuclear weapons.⁵⁶ Even more directly, retired Lt. General Wang Hongquang, a former high level commander, wrote in the Communist Party newspaper, *Global Times*, in December 2014, that China does not have to sustain North Korea in the future and that if the North Korean people

54. Jane Perlez, “China Bluntly Tells North Korea to Enter Nuclear Talks,” *New York Times*, May 24, 2013.

55. “A High Stakes Games,” *Washington Post*, March 4, 2013. Online; Steven Mufson, “Chinese Express Scorn for Longtime Ally,” *Washington Post*, April 14, 2013.

56. “Prominent PRC Expert Says DPRK Determined to Keep Nuclear Weapons,” Open Source Center, June 23, 2009.

do not support the regime, “collapse is just a matter of time.”⁵⁷

These criticisms probably have several meanings related to Chinese policies. Chinese leaders, no doubt, perceive that Chinese influence on North Korea has declined, and they are furious about this. They see this loss of influence in Kim Jong-un’s execution of his uncle, Jang Sung-taek, the North Korean leader considered most friendly with China. They are aware of denunciations of Chinese policies, especially votes for United Nations sanctions, coming out of the North Korean leadership.⁵⁸ They see Kim Jong-un seeking to build ties with Russia, apparently in part to weaken Chinese influence. The Chinese also see that the sizeable financial resources Iran provides to North Korea weaken China’s economic power over the Pyongyang government.

However, it seems to me that the heart of Chinese government criticisms come from the government’s attitude toward the North Korean nuclear and missile programs. Prior to October 2006, there were no significant Chinese criticisms of these programs. Chinese officials stated in the six-party talks that China favored North Korea’s proposal of a nuclear freeze and that North Korea should have a “peaceful” nuclear program. Then came the October 2006 nuclear test as the catalyst for open Chinese criticism. It seems to me that prior to the first nuclear test, Chinese policy was to give tacit support to North Korea’s nuclear weapons program as long as North Korea kept it secret. A freeze would have prevented open activity of the plutonium program, but clandestine work could continue. China shielded the secret uranium enrichment program from U.S. claims, again, because North Korea kept it secret. In short, China’s policy toward the nuclear program prior to October 2006 was: Keep It Secret and We Can Live With It! Shen Dingli, a scholar at Shanghai’s Fudan University was, in my view, correct when he stated in 2005 that China would accept a nuclear North Korea as long as North Korea did not

57. Jane Perlez, “Chinese Annoyance with North Korea Bubbles to the Surface,” *New York Times*, December 20, 2014.

58. Jeremy Bender, “North Korean Officials Accuse Their Only Ally of ‘Being in Bed with Imperialists’ in an Internal Memo,” *Business Insider*, June 3, 2014.

conduct a nuclear test.⁵⁹

North Korea undermined China's "Keep It Secret" policy with the nuclear test of October 2006. It undermined it further with its later nuclear tests. Pyongyang's tests of longer-range missiles also added to the undermining, as the missile and nuclear tests increasingly became linked in North Korea's stated objective of marrying missiles and nuclear warheads. North Korea's boasts of its accomplishments in its tests and the boastful admission in 2009 that it had a uranium enrichment program further undermined Chinese policy.

China's criticisms are partly intended to put North Korea's nuclear program "back into a bottle of secrecy," or at least reduce the attention given to it by other governments. Behind China's "Keep It Secret" policy was the objective of reducing the likelihood of strong military responses coming from the United States and keeping South Korea and Japan from considering nuclear weapons programs. The criticisms do not represent any intention of the Chinese government to end support to North Korea. However, statements advocating an end to support plus broader public criticism of North Korea demonstrate that there is a real debate developing in China. In past instances in which there was discussion of policy toward North Korea, the Chinese government was able to shut down independent voices suggesting policy change. However, today's debate and discussion appears to be too broad for the government to control completely.

Issues and Questions for the Future

The conditions surrounding North Korea's nuclear and missile programs have changed dramatically since the collapse of the six-party talks in 2008. China will face new challenges and decisions in dealing with it in the future. However, it is less certain that China will move away from the pattern of its past policies as described in this paper. It seems to me that much of these patterns are set firmly in the minds of

59. Joshua Kurlantzick, "China is Not the Answer," *New Republic*, June 6, 2005.

the current Chinese leadership and within those government organizations that set policy toward North Korea.

Therefore, it seems to me that China will seek two basic goals in the future. One will be to contain the North Korean nuclear program, to limit its growth and scope. However, this goal will not include limiting North Korea-Iran nuclear and missile collaboration. The second goal will be to cool the tensions among the United States, South Korea, and Japan and lower the attention they give to the North Korean programs. If so, the challenge will be to adjust past strategies and tactics to the changing circumstances of today and the future in order to achieve these goals.

The new conditions of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs likely could include one or more of three scenarios in the future.

Scenario One: North Korea Conducts New Nuclear and Long-range Missile Tests

This would be a continuation of the situation that existed during the 2009-2013 period. North Korea would continue to assert that the objective of the tests was to develop a long range missile and a nuclear warhead that could hit U.S. territory. There would be new reports of Iranian missiles experts in North Korea and Iranian nuclear experts observing the nuclear tests.

The Chinese government likely would step up criticism of North Korea and reduce diplomatic interactions with Pyongyang. There could be singular acts of enforcement of sanctions such as tougher inspections of border traffic, restrictions on a few more Chinese banks, and even some reduction in luxury goods going to North Korea. However, there would be no comprehensive enforcement of sanctions such as a wholesale crackdown on North Korea's accounts (open and concealed) in Chinese banks and on Chinese firms that do business with North Korean trading companies. Key North Korean trading companies would continue to operate in China. China would take no action to end or even limit North Korea and Iran from using Chinese air space, airports, and seaports to further their collaboration.

China would continue to call for a resumption of six-party talks. It likely will argue that the “success” of the Iran nuclear deal creates a strong case for resuming six-party talks. If the United States holds out for prior conditions on North Korea, China might become increasingly critical of the U.S. government.

In short, the pattern of Chinese policy demonstrated since the collapse of six-party talks in 2008 would continue under this scenario. Perhaps the biggest change would be in the expression of critical views of North Korea from Chinese outside government. That could expand in volume and number of people involved.

Scenario Two: No New Negotiations but No New Tests

This would be a longer continuation of the situation since the December 2012 and February 2013 missile and nuclear tests: no major tests like those for the last 2 1/2 years — although the May 2015 test of a missile from a submarine drew concern but also skepticism that the test was actually from a submarine. If this no testing situation should last two or three more years, China likely would believe that its criticisms and diplomatic shunning of North Korea were succeeding. There could be a lessening of Chinese criticism of North Korea, possibly a Chinese invitation to Kim Jong-un to visit Beijing, and an overall improvement in relations. China might begin to increase some economic and financial aid to North Korea as a reward for “good behavior.” Diplomatically, China could be expected to call for an end or at least a reduction in United Nations sanctions.

With apparent stability achieved in the North Korean nuclear and missile programs, China might focus more on decreasing tensions between North and South Korea, including discouraging North Korean provocations. China’s growing involvement in North-South issues would be partly aimed at increasing Chinese influence on South Korea’s future defense and foreign policies.

China undoubtedly would continue to call for a renewal of six-party talks. It would contend that a prolonged period of no North

Korean testing meant that prospects had improved for real negotiating progress if the talks were resumed.

Scenario Three: Re-opening of Six-party Talks

A resumption of six-party talks thus could be an outgrowth of Scenario Two, but it could come about in other ways, too. Like the earlier six-party talks, China would seek to avoid having to issue major proposals to bring about a shrinkage of North Korea's nuclear program. China would press the U.S. administration to negotiate bilaterally with North Korea. China would revert to its earlier six-party strategy of seeking a freeze of North Korea's nuclear program by urging the United States to negotiate a North Korean moratorium on future nuclear tests. China would urge and pressure as quietly as possible as in 2008. Chinese officials would argue to U.S. officials that such a freeze would contain North Korea from moving ahead to develop a nuclear warhead that could be mounted on a long-range missile that could hit U.S. territory. It is less certain whether Chinese officials would include in their urgings that the United States also seek a North Korean moratorium on future tests of long-range missiles. However, China strongly condemned North Korea's attempted long-range missile launch of April 2012 because it used ballistic missile technology.⁶⁰ But China also has agreed to UN sanctions in response to the missile tests. A moratorium on the testing of missiles from submarines could be included in China's proposals.

China at this juncture probably would cease to advocate that North Korea receive a light water reactor from the United States. But China could be expected to urge the U.S. administration to offer important concessions and benefits to North Korea in return for the North Korea moratoria on testing. China likely would call on the U.S. administration to offer North Korea diplomatic relations, an end to

60. Bonnie S. Glaser and Brittany Billingsley, *Reordering Chinese Priorities on the Korean Peninsula*, Report of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 2012, p. 11.

United Nations and U.S. sanctions, guaranteed food aid, and energy assistance. China could be expected to offer North Korea a basket of Chinese economic and financial aid as an incentive for them to agree to a freeze on future testing, possibly including increased shipments of oil.

China's strategy in new six-party talks would play upon the now frequently-stated U.S. concern that North Korea is nearing the achievement of a capability to strike the United States with a nuclear warhead-armed missile. Thus, a freeze-moratorium deal could have some appeal to a U.S. administration. Some American experts have argued that this should be the real U.S. objective in any new six-party talks.

While advocating active U.S.-North Korean negotiations on this kind of freeze, it seems to me that China would take the opposite approach to North Korea's other major accomplishments of its nuclear and missile programs: the development and mounting of nuclear warheads on Rodong missiles and the expansion of nuclear and missile collaboration with Iran — the proliferation issue. China likely would take a position similar to its position of 2007-2008 that North Korea should not be required to include uranium enrichment activities and proliferation activities in its declaration of nuclear programs.

Such a Chinese strategy might be effective in dealing with the United States and South Korea. A U.S. administration could find the containment of North Korea's testing of a nuclear long-range missile so attractive that it might adopt Chinese suggestions. Most likely, a U.S. administration would insist that a freeze deal include a moratorium on the testing of long-range missiles.

It seems possible that some elements of the Chinese proposal would match the initial objectives of the United States in renewed six-party talks. China's advocacy of deferring the Rodong warhead and proliferation issues might be acceptable to the United States and South Korea. Both the U.S. and South Korean governments clearly are unwilling to disclose publicly that North Korea has developed nuclear warheads for the Rodongs. It seems to me that they believe that public disclosure would create new policy problems for them. For example, disclosure would undermine the U.S. position that the

United States never will recognize North Korea as a nuclear weapons state. In nuclear negotiations with Iran, the Obama administration likely has feared that disclosure of Rodong nuclear warheads would result in questions being raised about such warheads being suitable for Iran's Shahab-3 missile, a twin of the Rodong developed with considerable North Korean input. The ROK government, no doubt, fears that disclosure of nuclear warheads on Rodongs would ignite demands in South Korea that South Korea begin to develop its own nuclear weapons.

China, no doubt, would try strongly to keep the proliferation issue, i.e, Iran, off the six-party table. Any proposals to end North Korean-Iranian collaboration would confront China with major obligations, decisions, and problems. It would be a major task for the Chinese government to shut down the North Korean network in China that maintains essential North Korean dealings with Iran. Beijing would not want to risk its growing relationship with Iran by denying Iran access to North Korean nuclear and missile experts, North Korean nuclear and missile facilities, and North Korean components and materials. This would include keep the Rodong warhead issue off the table, given the connection between the Rodong and Shahab-3 Iranian missile. China might even promise North Korea that the six parties would not take up proliferation as an inducement for North Korea to negotiate with the United States over a testing moratorium.

Surprisingly, this element of Chinese strategy might be attractive to a U.S. administration. Both the Bush and Obama administrations have refused to release information of nuclear collaboration between North Korea and Iran. The Bush administration never disclosed to Congress that Iran was involved in the Syrian nuclear reactor (It revealed North Korean involvement only after it received heavy pressure from the House of Representatives.) Obama administration officials have continued this "blackout" of information, denying that it has information on nuclear collaboration. Now, the Obama administration has an added incentive: the nuclear agreement it has negotiated with Iran. Obama officials know that revelations of North Korea-Iran collaboration on nuclear weapons would disrupt and possibly cause a

collapse of the agreement.

In order to divert the Rodong warhead and proliferation issues from six-party talks, China might go back to its 2007-2008 strategy of urging a concentration on the plutonium issue. This would entail influencing the United States to follow a freeze deal with North Korea with a second negotiation to secure a second freeze or disablement of the five megawatt plutonium reactor and plutonium reprocessing plant at Yongbyon. China would exploit U.S. concerns over North Korea re-starting these installations in 2014. China probably would have to support, as part of this strategy, a return of the International Atomic Energy Agency to Yongbyon, including IAEA access to the uranium enrichment plant there shown to Dr. Hecker in November 2010.

The threats or variables that China's six-party strategy would face would be these. South Korea, and even more likely, Japan may not agree to keep the Rodong nuclear warhead issue off the negotiating table. Rodongs with nuclear warheads threaten them, not the United States. China would have to hope that once the United States accepted the negotiating process suggested by China, Washington would be able to influence a compliant Japan.

North Korean actions would be a second threat. China's strategy would aim at getting North Korea back into a "Keep It Secret" mode with regard to its nuclear program and now its missile program. However, North Korea chose to break out of this mode with the 2006 nuclear test, subsequent tests, boastful proclamations of progress, and threats of nuclear attack against the United States. The Kim Jong-un regime might not be satisfied to remain in a "Keep It Secret" mode for very long.

North Korea, too, could upset China's view of the best negotiating process by demanding that the six parties, especially the United States, agree to negotiate over North Korea's long-standing demand that the United States must "end its nuclear threat" to North Korea as a condition for progress in "denuclearization." Or Pyongyang could insist that the six parties agree to North Korea's related long-standing demand that the United States negotiate a bilateral Korean peace

treaty with North Korea (without South Korea's participation). Both of these demands seek to force the United States to negotiate with North Korea over the U.S. military presence in South Korea. North Korea defines the "U.S. nuclear threat" as U.S. forces, U.S. weaponry, and U.S. military exercises in South Korea.

In the past, China has avoided taking strong stands on these North Korean demands. North Korean pressure on the six parties to give these demands a priority in negotiations would force China to make difficult decisions over whether to accede to North Korea and possibly have to adopt a firmer position on the issue of U.S. troops in South Korea.

Nevertheless, if these threats and variables did not materialize or were kept under control, this Chinese strategy would have a credible prospect of success. China's overall objective toward the North Korean nuclear and missile issues would be to use a moratorium on testing (or a prolonged de facto moratorium as in Scenario Two), a suspension of the facilities at Yongbyon, and a long implementation process for these agreements as the means to reduce the tensions over North Korea's programs and bring about a lowering of attention to North Korea's programs. These agreements, in effect, would end the *visible* components of North Korea's missile and nuclear programs. The secret, concealed components could proceed: secret installations, research, underground production of enriched uranium and nuclear warheads, and working with the Iranians. But to Chinese strategy, the American proverb "Out of Sight, Out of Mind" likely would be the result desired by China.

For the United States, South Korea, and Japan, the choice that would face them if they return to six-party talks and deal with China likely would be: Would an "Out of Sight, Out of Mind" result be good enough to satisfy their core security interests?

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Russia's Reassessment of the Korean Peninsula

Gilbert Rozman

Russia is impatient for action on the Korean Peninsula, which it views through the lens of the world order established by its victory in 1945. Given Russian views of China's sinocentric approach, the U.S. anti-*byungjin* approach, and South Korea's Eurasian Initiative, a hardline "turn to North Korea" is not surprising. As part of the "turn to the East," this reflects three factors: historical national identity, geopolitical strategy, and geo-economic developmental plans for the Russian Far East. The result is increased encouragement for North Korea and increased pressure on South Korea with the implicit threat of tilting further to the North if recent policy, such as Park Geun-hye's snubbing of Putin's invitations, is not changed. While the North Koreans are playing Moscow off against Beijing, the northern triangle is more complicated than that. Russia's "turn to China" and Pyongyang's need for Beijing are likely to put Beijing in the driver's seat as the next stages of diplomatic maneuvering unfold.

Keywords: historical memory, turn to the East, Eurasian Initiative, six-party talks, new cold war

None of the other countries involved in the six-party talks is satisfied with current diplomacy over North Korea, but, Russia is, arguably, most impatient to intervene with a strategy to alter the thinking in both Pyongyang and Seoul. It is now the most active in bilateral "encouragement" of the North Koreans and the most problematic in bilateral "blackmail" toward the South Koreans, i.e., its implicit message is that if Seoul's policies are deemed to be insufficiently favorable, Moscow is prepared to do more in support of Pyongyang. Putin was expecting Kim Jong-un in Moscow for the 70th anniversary victory celebration and military parade, but barely a week ahead Kim reversed his plans to attend. Yet, that should not distract us from what Russia

was seeking to accomplish or how it might proceed in subsequent overtures to the North Koreans and hardball diplomacy with the South Koreans. Wishful thinking about Russia's intentions — its continued support for denuclearization, its diplomacy conducive to cooperation to resume the six-party talks, and its lack of overt Cold War rhetoric in official statements about North Korea — should not distract us from what is written and said by Russian specialists amid today's overall policy context.

Views of Russian Intentions

Views of Russia's intentions are split. One viewpoint is that Russia is faithful to the spirit of 5 vs. 1, sharing the same objectives as the other four that have engaged in consultations since the start of the six-party talks in 2003,¹ while still prioritizing denuclearization. Not only has its diplomacy of late not been interfering, a proactive approach by it actually serves to facilitate what Seoul and Washington are seeking. When Kim Jong-un did not appear in Moscow, this seemed to confirm the view that Russia was offering him too little and was even asking him to make concessions.

Even if there is no evidence to this effect, some writers remain hopeful that Russia is amenable to joint efforts to find a way forward to resolve the North Korean issue. Shimotomai Nobuo analyzed the rapidly improving relations between Russia and North Korea by April 2015 as a "small renaissance," which he argues can be directly linked to the Ukraine situation.² Shortly after that crisis arose, Russia forgave USD 10 billion in loans. It is planning to increase bilateral trade to USD 1 billion by 2020, and there is talk of no-visa travel to the Russian Far East, as some see both ideological closeness and anti-U.S. stances as factors. Both states opposed U.S. military exercises

1. Dmitry Suslov, comments at panel, "Reordering U.S.-Russia Relations," *Asan Plenum*, Seoul, April 29, 2015.

2. Shimotomai Nobuo, "Russia and North Korea" (in Japanese), *Toa*, no. 4 (2015), pp. 42-48.

and see interference in human rights as just a U.S. pretext. Shimotomai downplays ideology and views Putin — part of his turn to Asia — as seeking balance between the South and the North, while Kim Jong-un is venting anger over China drawing closer to the South. This viewpoint toward both parties offers hope not only for Japanese diplomacy to Russia but also for regional balancing without close Sino-Russia ties. It takes the side of those who minimize concern about Russia's wooing of the North.

Some in Russia put a benign spin on its "turn to North Korea," insisting that Moscow is serious about denuclearization, that it is not in defiance of others in the six-party talks, and that it is guiding Pyongyang into a transition that can work, combining reform with confidence in political stability. They draw the lesson from transitions in China, Vietnam, and Russia that the old elite solidifies its power, that a degree of market reform and opening does not undermine central control of economic levers, and that, at least in Beijing and Moscow, resistance to the U.S.-led regional or global order need not be diminished. Not just is Moscow teaching these lessons, it offers its support in making them come true. Thus, they rationalize veering toward the North.

There is another viewpoint; however, that Russia is approaching North Korea in accord with thinking that a new cold war has begun, not only in Europe, but in Asia, and given its isolation, Russia must value a friendly partner in the North, not a U.S. ally in the South.³ Given the bulk of recent writings and the main direction of the policy on display in Moscow in recent months, this article gravitates to the second viewpoint. It is not just recent writings following the Ukraine crisis that lead to the conclusion that Russia perceives North Korea through the prism of constructing a new regional order. This is a

3. Alexander Zhebin, "Carte Blanche: How to maintain balance of power on the Korean Peninsula" (in Russian), *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, April 8, 2015; Georgy Toloraya, "Kim Jong Un's Diplomatic Debut: A View from Russia," *38 North*, January 20, 2015. <http://38north.org/2015/01/gtoloraya012015/> (date accessed: May 14, 2015); Alexander Vorontsov, "Korean Unification: A Fleeting Opportunity," Strategic Cultural Foundation, November 13, 2014.

mainstay in publications appearing in recent years.⁴

We do not know if Kim Jong-un did not go to Moscow, as planned, for the May 9 celebration due to domestic politics (insecurity in power), bilateral reasons (lack of Russian incentives), or strategic calculations (determination to remain outside the world of diplomacy in single-minded pursuit of becoming recognized as a nuclear weapons power). The impression left with observers may be that Kim's "pivot to Russia" in 2014-2015 is not very consequential. While Russia has been the easiest target for escaping North Korea's isolation in the six-party talks grouping, perhaps its limited degree of support has fallen short of the North's demands. Yet, Moscow's pursuit is still on course. Pyongyang is not likely to dismiss such overtures, and the key to analysis must be what Russia is considering as it prepares for further contact.

Asahi Shimbun reported that not only did Kim Jong-un send another top official in his stead, he sent Putin a congratulatory telegram, while on May 8 in Pyongyang, Putin arranged a ceremony to bestow on Kim a 70th anniversary victory medal. It said, few think that Kim's absence means that relations with Russia will deteriorate.⁵ Both countries find it in their interest to use the other to contain the United States, and North Korea is using Russia effectively to pursue China with triangular goals. Much Japanese coverage of the Putin-Xi summit on May 8 and their joint attendance at the victory parade centered on shared historical understanding opposed to the United States and Japan, which bodes well for inclusion of North Korea, perhaps as early as the September 3 victory celebration in Beijing, where the victorious mood will be sustained against those who are accused of seeking to undo the results by reviving fascism in Europe and Japanese militarism but, presumably, also by policies to cause regime

4. M. I. Krupianko and L. G. Aresshidze, *The U.S. and East Asia: Struggle for "new order"* (in Russian), (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2010).

5. "Russia's Military Parade Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of Victory against Germany Boasts Weapons Advancement" (in Japanese), *Asahi Shimbun*, May 10, 2015, p. 6.

change in North Korea and absorption of it by South Korea.⁶ Given the stress on history versus Japan in China and now in Russia too, North Korea is a natural partner; its historical significance is viewed similarly in the two countries.⁷

The Intersection of Policies in Multiple Countries

To grasp the dynamics of the Russia-DPRK-ROK triangle with China and the United States looming in the background, we should start with the intersection of policies in three countries: 1) Beijing's *sinocentric* approach that mostly prioritizes "peace and stability," while recently leaving it unclear if denuclearization has risen to the first priority; 2) Washington's *anti-byungjin* approach that regards deterrence as the fallback position if Pyongyang remains unyielding; and 3) Seoul's *Eurasian Initiative*, which promises economic benefits to Russia, but makes them largely dependent on the opening of North Korea. We then consider: Pyongyang's *pivot to Russia*, which seeks military, economic, and diplomatic support; and Moscow's *turn to the East*, which might better be called "pivot to China." In regard to Moscow's policies, we can distinguish historical national identity, geopolitical strategy, geo-economic interests, and plans for the development of the Russian Far East. How Russia perceives the intersection of policies in the five countries most attentive to North Korea and is combining the four concerns driving its policies is critical to grasping its willingness to cooperate with strategies that prioritize denuclearization and even reunification. In this framework, the Korean Peninsula is only an object of great power rivalry.

6. "Country Report: Japan," *The Asan Forum*, No. 3 (May-June), 2015.

7. Gilbert Rozman, "Historical Memories and International Relations in Northeast Asia," in *Criminality and Collaboration: Europe and Asia Confront the Memory of World War II*, eds. Daniel Chirot, Shin Gi-Wook, and Dan Sneider (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), pp. 211-33.

China's Sinocentrism and Russian Policies

No matter whether we look at Moscow's policy toward Northeast Asia or Southeast Asia, the most suitable starting point is how it intersects with policy toward Beijing.

Beijing has been in the driver's seat for the past two decades, as Moscow prioritized improving relations with a rising power that shares a long border and was long seen as a rival in Asia and beyond. Beijing and Moscow supported Pyongyang for over four decades, while at times also competing for influence over it. Loss of influence over Pyongyang was a prominent theme in Russian regrets about the absence of clout in Asia from the time of the first nuclear crisis in 1993-1994.⁸ While Putin shifted to personal diplomacy in 2000 to 2002 to regain some leverage, once the six-party talks began, following the early 2003 DPRK rejection of a special role for Russia in resolving the second nuclear crisis, the Russian position grew increasingly aligned with China's stance. Misleading talk in the United States that the line-up was 5 vs. 1, as if agreement among five states on the goal of denuclearization meant agreement on strategy and on the steps to reach that goal, obscured the Sino-Russian overlap and coordination in approach.⁹ Because of obvious differences in geo-economic aims with Russia seeking a north-south corridor linked to its two largest Far East cities of Vladivostok and Khabarovsk and China eyeing an east-west corridor connected to its Northeast provinces of Jilin and Liaoning, there is reason to view national interests as opposed, not only because a sinocentric result would leave Russia marginalized. Recent writing on Kim Jong-un's decision not to go to Moscow on May 9, while he is presumably weighing whether to go to Beijing on September 3 for another gala to mark the 70th anniversary of victory,

8. Gilbert Rozman, "Russian Foreign Policy in Northeast Asia," in *The International Relations of Northeast Asia*, ed. Sam Kim (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), pp. 201-24.

9. Gilbert Rozman, *Strategic Thinking about the Korean Nuclear Crisis: Four Parties Caught between North Korea and the United States* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

also suggests a zero-sum situation.¹⁰ However, as in the Cold War era, more important than competition are overlapping strategies.

Sinocentrism refers to a region centered on China reminiscent of the imperial era tributary system, requiring deference to Chinese political leadership and cultural sensitivities. The Korean Peninsula is the poster-child of this old order and the most obvious starting point for its reimposition. Russia is striking a delicate balance, both working closely with China and encouraging Korean efforts to avoid sinocentrism.

Broader conceptualization of Chinese and Russian objectives, especially in the next stage of peninsular developments, demonstrates greater correspondence of tactics. Beijing does not want South Korea to absorb North Korea, imposing a political order based on democracy and addressing human rights issues from the perspective of “universal values.” This would be equivalent to a “color revolution.” Neither does Moscow. Indeed, the convergence of views is rooted in a shared outlook on how the history of the Korean War should be portrayed, a shared understanding that long-standing support for North Korea should not be in vain, and a shared rejection of the balance of power threat from the South absorbing the North.¹¹ Attitudes that earlier Chinese were expressing more intensely, especially from 2009,¹² have permeated Russian writings on the Korean Peninsula in the last few years, although already during the 1990s-2000s leading Russian and Chinese specialists were hinting at their content.¹³ Views of the Korean

10. “Kim Jong-un Decides not to Attend Russia’s Victory Celebrations” (in Japanese), *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 30, 2015; *Tokyo Shimbun*, May 1, 2015, p. 9.

11. Gilbert Rozman, *The Sino-Russian Challenge to the World Order: National Identities, Bilateral Relations, and East vs. West in the 2010s* (Washington DC and Stanford, CA: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 2014).

12. Gilbert Rozman, “Chinese Politics and the Korean Peninsula,” in, *Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies—Asia at a Tipping Point: Korea, the Rise of China, and the Impact of Leadership Transitions*, ed. idem. (Washington, DC: Korea Economic Institute, 2012), pp. 59-75.

13. Gilbert Rozman, ed., *U.S. Leadership, History, and Bilateral Relations in Northeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

War serve as a kind of litmus test. Briefly in the 1990s, they were debated. In recent years, old thinking has revived with no debate.

Despite elements of competition with China, Russians insist that the policies of the two are complementary.¹⁴ Both are opposed to the U.S. “regime change” approach. Both reject pressure on Pyongyang on human rights. Together they seek to thwart the reunification goals of Seoul as well as Washington. If Beijing was in the lead in engaging Pyongyang for a time, Moscow shifted to a more forward-looking attitude in 2013-2014. If Beijing retakes the lead — after all its economic ties are much closer —, Russians insist that this does not signify a rivalry since the goals are much the same. In any case, negative remarks are directed solely at the United States and its allies.¹⁵

U.S. Anti-Byungjin Pressure and Russian Policies

Insistent that Washington is guilty of aggression, containment, and unilateralism in pursuit of world domination, Moscow imputes the same motivations to its behavior in Asia as in Europe.¹⁶ There is no longer any talk of policies to balance China’s power or to draw U.S. allies into multipolarity. Rather the assumption is that China is facing the same polarizing containment as Russia, and that the two must work together more closely than in the past. Despite explanations, at times, that China does not feel the same degree of urgency to confront the United States, the clear expectation is that it is only temporarily more cautious and polarization with Russia joining China is inevitable. Rather than China’s behavior causing problems, U.S. conduct is heavily blamed in Russian sources, as seen in the spring of 2015.¹⁷

14. Mikhail Titorenko, “Russia, China, and a new world order,” (in Russian) *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn’*, No. 3, 2015.

15. Aleksandr Zhebin, “Korean problem: seeking solutions” (in Russian), *Nezavisimāia Gazeta*, April 8, 2015.

16. See the summaries of articles in “Country Report: Russia” and “Country Report: China,” both bi-monthly, in *The Asan Forum*. See www.theasanforum.org.

17. “Country Report Russia,” *The Asan Forum* 3, no. 3 (2015).

Second to Central Asia, the shadow of sinocentrism falls on the Korean Peninsula, as the gateway to the Russian Far East and, perhaps, a harbinger of China's resurgent claims to once disputed territory there. Fear spread in the 1990s, following decades of rhetoric about the "yellow peril" and territorial threats, of Chinese flooding across the border, China's "quiet expansionism" through economic means, and one-sided trade to keep the Russian Far East as just a "colonial" raw material provider.¹⁸ While these have diminished, as demagogic governors were brought to heel, there still is concern, which could be amplified by signs that Russia is being squeezed by China extending its control over North Korea, close to the strategic city of Vladivostok. For now, however, Putin and Xi insist that the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union are complementary and will go together well, while on North Korea they are so used to supporting each other they do not even have to dispel doubts.¹⁹

The centerpiece in U.S. policy toward North Korea is insistence that it abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons and other states reject its policy of "guns and butter," i.e., continuing to build its nuclear weapons and missiles capacity while seeking outside support for economic development. The opposite position is to support expanded economic ties and assistance to North Korea, perhaps claiming that as a result the North would decide on its own accord to abandon its nuclear program or, in a less disguised manner, justifying it as a military counterweight to the United States and its alliances. U.S. anti-*byungjin* policies are widely opposed in Russia.

Instead of acknowledging that Washington's anti-*byungjin* policy is a conditional approach to North Korea with the aim of supporting its integration into the global economy to the extent it is willing to advance an agenda of denuclearization, the Russian narrative consistently distorts the policy, ignores the overtures made to Pyongyang over the years, and places the onus on Washington to meet reason-

18. Gilbert Rozman, *Northeast Asia's Stunted Regionalism: Bilateral Distrust in the Shadow of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

19. "Country Report: Japan," *The Asan Forum* 3, no. 3 (2015).

able demands for normalization of relations to counter threats of regime change.²⁰

There is a drumbeat of calls by Russians for Washington to change course. Thus, the denuclearization goal, which Russians insist they are pursuing, is less a matter of a decision in Pyongyang than of a U.S. decision that will unlock the door to progress. This idea that Washington has it in its power to resolve the crisis has dominated in Russian publications since the beginning of the six-party talks, although the exact concessions that are needed and the excuses for Pyongyang's lack of receptivity to Washington's latest approach vary over time. On *byungjin*, the Russian position is, it is another form of regime change and undue pressure, when what is needed is quite the opposite — support for the North Korean economic development plans in order to give it the confidence to agree to denuclearization. More than the economy, it is assurances about security — bilateral and regional — that Russians see as necessary.

The critical divide over North Korea is not over denuclearization as a vague goal, but over economic support to give the North the confidence eventually to decide it does not need such weapons or economic pressure to show the North that it is isolated and has no choice but to denuclearize in order to overcome its dismal economy. In Russia, the case for economic support is widely presented, opposing U.S. thinking.

South Korea's Eurasian Initiative and Russian Policies

Russians welcome Seoul's Eurasian Initiative but not for the reasons Seoul intends. Seoul sees this as enticement for North Korea, serving to coordinate with Moscow a message of large-scale economic development once preconditions are met.²¹ In the case of Moscow, however,

20. Valerii Denisov, "Nuclear Problem in the Korean Peninsula: is there an exit in the final state?" (in Russian), *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn*, no. 2 (2015).

21. Kim Taehwan, "Beyond Geopolitics: South Korea's Eurasia Initiative as a New Nordpolitik," *The Asan Forum* 3, no. 1 (2015).

it appears to be a way to boost North Korea's economy with or without the critical conditions Seoul requires. Indeed, the Russian message increasingly is that South Korean commitments are needed or Russia will blame Seoul for its failure to take the steps important toward resolving the crisis. Instead, it will be seen as joining the United States in a regime change strategy. The failure of Park Geun-hye to attend the Sochi Olympics and the 70th anniversary of victory in WWII celebration invite the verdict by Russians that she is too beholden to her ally, the United States, to pursue a balanced, separate foreign policy toward North Korea.

The Eurasian Initiative is but one of a number of "middle power" policies of Park Geun-hye that are proving harder to sustain in the divisive regional environment of 2015.²² The Russo-U.S. divide is too great to expect to find some middle ground, and Seoul's leverage on Russia is too meager to change its course on North Korea. Russia has less money for infrastructure in line with this initiative, Seoul has less optimism that investments would prove helpful in changing Pyongyang's attitudes, and there are new barriers against Park even meeting with Putin as the Ukraine crisis persists.

North Korea's Pivot to Russia and Russia's Turn to the East

Pyongyang is seeking to break out of its isolation without having to agree to steps toward denuclearization and relaxation of its military pressure on South Korea and beyond. This is unacceptable to Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo. Beijing sympathizes with it in many respects, but it is insistent on denuclearization as an objective — the pathway to a complex set of negotiations through the six-party talks, which it seeks to steer toward desirable outcomes for a new regional security order and a gradual process of reunification malleable to a sinocentric state. Russia is the state with the fewest demands on North Korea

22. Gilbert Rozman, "South Korea's Foreign Policy Options, Option 5: Rethinking Middle Power Diplomacy," *The Asan Forum* 3, no. 3 (2015).

and the most support for Korean reunification as a strong state with maximum independence from Washington and Beijing. Although it is modest in its economic generosity, Russia's growing alienation from the West and U.S. allies South Korea and Japan makes it an increasingly attractive partner. Waiting for Beijing to be more supportive — after a troubled time in 2013-2014 —, Pyongyang turned to Moscow, knowing it need not choose one or the other. Increasingly close Sino-Russian ties raise the prospect of Kim Jong-un standing side-by-side Xi and Putin, as may happen on September 3 if Kim can find a way to meet Xi's demands.

Russia's policy toward the Korean Peninsula has evolved through four discernible stages since the end of the Cold War. There are four factors, at least, impacting its shifting course: (1) thinking about its development track; (2) thinking about the Cold War; (3) thinking about the United States and its two allies in Northeast Asia; and (4) thinking about China. In the first stage through the 1990s (although it was losing force at the end of the decade), Russia was relatively hopeful about the development of Siberia and the Russian Far East through international investment. The primary assumption was that the Cold War had ended and a new era had dawned, whereby North Korea would join South Korea-led unification. Russia counted on the United States, Japan, and South Korea to engage it, to invest in it, and to integrate it into the Asia-Pacific region with economics in the forefront. Finally, China would be a good partner, but it would be prevented from becoming the dominant force in the Russian Far East through migration, investments, or political dependence. North Korea was not a major object of diplomacy, given its dreadful economic state and concern that expanding political or military ties would not serve Russia's integrationist goals.

In the second stage, through most of the 2000s, Russian confidence centered on its rise as an energy superpower, which could entice investors into Siberia and the Far East on terms favorable to it. There was still an assumption that the Cold War was over, but it was qualified by a rising belief that balance of power maneuvering had resumed. Now, Moscow could play off different states, becoming a

factor in regional diplomacy over North Korea. China's role was growing, allowing for multipolarity instead of Russia having to join a regional order determined by the United States. As a member of the six-party talks, Russia tilted toward China's position, striving also to find common ground with South Korea in order to capitalize on its energy power.

The third stage of Russia's shifting approach to the Korean Peninsula came with the global financial crisis, the collapse of the six-party talks, and the more aggressive turn in China's foreign policy. Yet, with Dmitry Medvedev following a cautious policy domestically and internationally, the full implications of this approach were left unexplained. Russia's development model was shaken, but energy prices regained their earlier peak, and Medvedev's plans for modernization muddled the picture. The main reason for growing confidence was a more arrogant attitude toward the economic conditions in the United States and the EU and the sense that the BRICS represent the wave of the future, as high growth rates in the developing world — Asia above all — will make Russia an even bigger energy superpower while it is recovering as a military superpower. New thinking about the Cold War revived its logic of military balancing, maximizing state power, and confronting ideological threats. In this period Russia reinterpreted multipolarity as a way to ride China's rise to challenge the United States, while balancing China through strengthened ties across Asia. As bipolarity intensified, Russia retained hopes for multipolarity. Its policy toward China had become increasingly contradictory, as had its handling of North Korea (a return to personal diplomacy) and South Korea (as if its engagement of North Korea would succeed). Russia's policies were facing an impasse when Putin resumed the presidency, impatient as problems were mounting at home and abroad.

The fourth stage of Russia's policy toward the Korean Peninsula began before the onset of the Ukraine crisis in March 2014 and was accelerated in the new conditions. Russia's development model was facing stagnation even before energy prices fell in late 2014. Prospects for increased investment were dim, and the EU economies had little

need for more energy from Russia. Indeed, global supplies were expanding, and Russia's energy leverage was declining. Russian leaders had decided that it was time to reestablish a sphere of economic and political control on territories from the Soviet Union, as if the Cold War had never ended. Rejecting the verdicts of 1989-1991, they regretted policies that had caused the collapse of the Soviet Union and the loss of its bloc. Russia's "turn to Asia" would be made possible by riding the tailwind of China's aggressive policies and also North Korea's belligerent defiance. Accepting bipolarity as the main tendency and losing hope for Tokyo and Seoul, Moscow took a more benign view of dependency on China, protesting to the point of unbelievability that stronger ties are based on equality. Its new, benign view of North Korea posited that country as a victim, which needed a champion in order to fend off U.S. threats.

Russia's Isolation and Rethinking about North Korea

Moscow grew increasingly isolated in Asia in the 1970s-1980s, and this is occurring again in the mid-2010s with the big exception of its strengthening relationship with China. It is again a one-sided great power (reliant overwhelmingly on its military for this status). In place of its socialist camp and a loose partnership with India, it now has a quasi-alliance with China and the "rogue state" of North Korea as its principal partners as well as some neighbors wary of arousing its anger. Moscow is reviving a strategy of polarization, reasserting the logic of the Cold War as enshrined in calls to respect the historical verdicts of the Soviet victory in 1945. It is as if the transition in 1989-1991 is nothing more than a bad dream as far as geopolitics and national identity are concerned. This is the policy context for its overtures to the Korean Peninsula.

The Russian "turn to the East" has prioritized North Korea to a degree few realize. As early as the summer of 2000 Putin realized its significance, stopping there on his maiden trip to the region. In 2004 as Putin's distrust of the West grew, he shifted to a more sympathetic

approach to the North in the six-party talks. Returning to the presidency in 2012, Putin acted quickly to cancel most of North Korea's debts and by 2013 was drastically accelerating contacts with officials there. Pyongyang and Moscow have in common a desire to boost ties to Beijing but not to let it dictate their policies and a high priority for turning to each other as useful for ties to China.

Russians are embracing what used to be a popular theory in the West with a twist. Instead of economic development leading to democratization/political convergence and domestic stability as well as peace with other countries, such development is seen as supporting authoritarian (communist regimes), preventing convergence, and facilitating a balance of power between rival systems. Promotion of market reforms would take a back seat to strengthening the state-centered economy and an urban strata beholden to the center, as the economic gap narrowed between North and South and also the gap in confidence over which state has a superior system.

Putin's third term as president has seen a drastic upgrading in relations between Moscow and Pyongyang. Official meetings are much more frequent. A multiple of projects are at the initial stage. Both sides make it clear that they need each other in order to diversify their principal foreign policy initiatives away from Beijing, despite primary reliance on it, to send a message to Washington, and to put pressure on Seoul and Tokyo. This shared logic is not being seriously challenged in Moscow.

Moscow's Historical National Identity

Russian national identity under Putin has revived ideology — despite no Marxist-Leninist quotations —, reaffirmed Soviet history in important respects, rejected the civilization of the West in favor of some sort of Eurasianism embracing neighbors of an authoritarian orientation, and insisted on Russia assuming a great power status in East Asia.²³

23. Rozman, *The Sino-Russian Challenge to the World Order*.

North Korea is a welcome object for this reconstructed identity. It poses no identity challenge — indeed, its opposition to U.S. ideology is a plus. Its history is construed as supportive of Russia's thinking about the Cold War era. The threat of a "color revolution" hangs over it, making it a sympathetic target of the cultural imperialism of the West. Finally, as a new cold war unfolds, this is one of the few states that treats Russia's "turn to the East" as positive for the balance of power.

Russians approach the Korean Peninsula with four assumptions: (1) its division is part of the legacy of 1945, which in this year of the 70th anniversary celebration is a sacred inheritance vital to national identity; (2) given the emergence of a new and enduring cold war, any resolution of the Korean nuclear crisis should be consistent with the Russian national interest in this struggle; (3) Russia's "turn to the East" is centered, above all on China, coordination with which takes precedence in the way Russia deals with North Korea; and (4) the economic future of North Korea must be inextricably linked to the development needs of the Russian Far East. These are the starting points for policy choices that depend on South Korea-Russia relations, but even more on Russia's relations with the other three great powers active in the area. North Korea's choices matter, improving or dimming Russia's possibilities, even if, as in the four decades of the Cold War, there is little that Pyongyang might do that crosses a red line for Moscow, as it jockeys with Beijing and focuses on Washington.

Russian thinking, spurred by the 70th anniversary events, showcases the danger of the revival of fascism and militarism, not of Stalinism and Maoism. Thus, no mention is made in official statements or mainstream writings of any danger from Kim Jong-un following in his father and grandfather's footsteps. Instead, a regime change in North Korea is equated with a more dangerous environment for Russia, opening the door to South Korea (whose democratic order is distrusted for being part of a U.S.-led order and supportive of "universal values" threatening to other civilizations and capable of provoking instability in Northeast Asia, especially through its pressure on North Korea. This is a matter of national interest, even more of national

identity.

North Korea has come to have symbolic importance for Russia, as for China, as one centerpiece in historical narratives about the justice of Soviet conduct in the Cold War. A contrast is drawn with the 1990s, when it serves as the poster child for an idealistic Russian foreign policy, which was duped by the United States and failed to defend Russia's national interests. The commemoration on May 9 was used as an opportunity to recommit Moscow to defend its spoils from 1945. Clearly, in future dealings related to Pyongyang, the historical dimension will be in the forefront.

Russia is reluctant to acknowledge national identity as a force in its diplomacy, but it professes a clear understanding about its national interests. In Northeast Asia, the Korean Peninsula tops the list of areas beyond Russia's borders of vital interest and where Russia has been repeatedly tested — in 1904-1905, 1945, and 1950-1953. Failure to manage the peninsula would, they assume, bring military danger right to the door of the Vladivostok. Success would establish a buffer more favorable than in Soviet times. With this logic, Russians see the military threat to North Korea as a threat shared by them, and the solution to both problems to be essentially the same. This is the message in numerous publications from the leading think tanks in Moscow and in newspaper articles, some of which have been summarized in *The Asan Forum*.²⁴

Russia's Geopolitical Strategy

On April 1 a *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* article asked how to maintain the balance of power on the Korean Peninsula, an indication of Russia's priority in thinking about North Korea. In it, Alexander Zhebin raised doubts about whether sanctions have been well conceived. He argued that Russia's intensification of dialogue with North Korea in 2014 was not just a result of a more active policy in the East but also a

24. "Country Report: Russia," *The Asan Forum*, issues in 2014-2015.

recognition of the global distribution of forces and the North's support (unlike the South) for Russia, sending a representative to the Sochi Olympics and voting at the United Nations on Crimea and Ukraine. Having already agreed on a year of friendship between Russia and North Korea and on setting a program for economic cooperation, they are poised to draw closer, Zhebin argued, if Kim Jong-un attends the 70th anniversary events. Looking back, he faults earlier Russian moves as based on idealism about the United States and some of its allies (South Korea?) rather than sober calculations of Russia's national interests. Russia erred in thinking that Washington's actions would take Russia's security into account, he added, repeating the assumptions of the Soviet era about a zero-sum world order in which security trumps any other national interests. Especially mistaken, he argued, were efforts to stop development of missiles, which would leave North Korea defenseless. Depriving the North of the right to buy weapons and parts for them when South Korea and other neighbors had that right is discriminatory, Zhebin insisted. Even worse, despite protestations from Beijing and Moscow, Seoul is preparing to join the U.S.-led ballistic missile defense program. Not surprisingly, the sanctions on the North had the opposite effect, forcing it to double down on its nuclear and missile programs to compensate for a growing imbalance. Zhebin concluded that sanctions on the North are restricting the political and economic policies of Russia. This is made worse when the United States is driving its East Asian allies now to turn to anti-Russian sanctions. The conclusion is that sanctions should be lifted toward a friendly and sympathetic country, whose role over 70 years in the balance of power has supported peace and stability in the region. The alternative is to yield to plans to liquidate the DPRK, which would seriously weaken the security of Russia, readers are informed.

As Zhebin wrote in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* on April 8, the six-party talks were long seen as a mechanism for forming a new system of security in Northeast Asia. He argued that the talks failed, in effect, because they became mired in the question of denuclearization instead of staying focused on this bigger objective. The long-term, Soviet

thinking about regional security first, reunification and arms control second is echoed by Zhebin. Seoul is guilty of joining Washington and Tokyo in seeking to unify the peninsula as part of a NATO of the East with a more robust ballistic missile defense network than in Europe. Obama has made clear that he is building alliances, striving for further U.S. leadership not for a regional security framework. The goal is to contain China and Russia too. Thus, Zhebin sees Asia as heading in the same direction that Europe has lately been taking.

A millennium of history should prove to Koreans that friendship with one great power against another or others does not bring peace to the peninsula or bring reunification closer. A neutral, future united Korea through guarantees from the four powers is the most acceptable variant: (1) the big four refrain from any military treaties and from stationing or sending troops there except under UN auspices; (2) Korea promises not to form any alliances as old alliances are terminated; and (3) both Koreas promise to proceed to reunification only through peaceful means, as they cut back on their arms, allowing North Korea to concentrate on its economy and South Korea to help in this endeavor. After the United States guarantees the security of the DPRK — together with China and Russia to make it more credible —, the DPRK can turn to liquidating its nuclear weapons. The article concludes by pointing the blame only at the United States and its allies for preventing the six-party talks from succeeding by striving to use this forum for an undeclared agenda to liquidate the DPRK and turn the peninsula into a fortress of the maritime powers, the United States and Japan, against the continental powers of Russia and China. In this perspective denuclearization is not the starting point but the end point of a process that begins with a regional security framework and proceeds to unification.

On April 8 *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* reported on the visit of Sung Kim to Moscow in the latest attempt to get agreement to reanimate the negotiations over North Korea. Failed attempts to restart the six-party talks, which are viewed as the framework for a new system of security in Northeast Asia, again raise the question why are efforts not leading to results. The article explains that the fundamental question

that needs to be resolved for the future peace regime in Northeast Asia is how will a united Korea fit into it. For Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul, a united Korea is viewed within their trilateral military-political alliance, to which Australia is now linked. The appearance of such an alliance on Russia's Far East borders is equivalent to the formation of an Asian clone of NATO, as is a closed system of American missile defense, which is much further along in Northeast Asia than in Europe. Unfortunately, Barack Obama has made clear that he is prioritizing bilateral alliances with the main aim of containing China and Russia as well, which both cannot accept. The article asks, look at what is occurring now in Europe, and how could you want the same in Asia? The Korean Peninsula looms high in geopolitics in Asia.

In the May 12 issue of *The Korea Herald* there was a report on China and Russia again seeking the resumption of the six-party talks.²⁵ Other states are reluctant in large part because they recognize that the new talks, after a hiatus of seven years or longer, would be fundamentally different from the old ones. Not only would North Korea concentrate on winning recognition as a nuclear power, but China and, especially Russia, would be insistent on turning the talks into a platform for replacing U.S.-led alliances with some regional security architecture, supposedly as the reassurance needed to secure North Korea's trust and cooperation. Russian geopolitical reasoning is now in the forefront.

Russia's priorities for North Korea are: (1) the cornerstone of a regional security framework centered on the 5th working group of the six-party talks, replacing the U.S. alliance system with guarantees from the major powers of the North's security and exclusion from alliances; (2) the energy and transportation corridor for a new, regional economic architecture, in which international assistance makes the North's economy a locomotive for the region; and (3) the confident

25. "China, Russia Reaffirm Efforts to Resume N. Korea Nuclear Talks," *The Korea Herald*, May 12, 2015. <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150512000690> (date accessed: May 13, 2015).

participant in delayed denuclearization as a consequence of the first two transformations. Moreover, as preconditions for reunification of the peninsula, Russians also place demands on South Korea: (1) the partner in replacing its current security approach, removing U.S. bases and troops and accepting guarantees from the major powers of its security that eliminate the prospects of any new alliance; (2) the main source of funding for the economic revival of North Korea through regional as well as inter-Korean linkages; and (3) the fundamentally changed supporter of accepting North Korea without pressure for democratization or human rights. Russia's focus, arguably, is more on changing South Korea than North Korea, prioritizing security first, second economics, third denuclearization, and last human rights. These goals inform its thinking about the approaches of each of the major actors in peninsular affairs.

Russia's myth of multipolarity was increasingly exposed in 2014-2015. Earlier talk of a separate pole or more in Europe had disappeared even before the Ukraine crisis. An emphasis on Japan was vanishing even before the anticipated Putin visit to Tokyo was first postponed and then dropped from sight in 2015. When Park Geun-hye did not attend the 70th anniversary ceremony on May 9, South Korea lost relevance, but when Kim Jong-un cancelled his visit there was still hope that North Korea could be helpful in salvaging Russia's leverage in the region. While talk of India as a pole has lingered and some vague notion of ASEAN as a pole is repeated, Russia's pivot to China is what is really left standing, as Xi Jinping prepared to be the host of his own 70th gala that would display China's much greater regional centrality. Russia can proceed with its North Korea gambit, but it is unlikely to do so apart from China.

The only explanation for the April 2015 announcement of an agreement on joint efforts on outer space could easily be interpreted as a Russian warning in support of military cooperation, despite claims that this would be for peaceful uses. After all, Pyongyang is in the habit of clothing its long-range missile launches in the language of satellite launches. This is one example of Russia's growing resort

to intimidation in order to pressure Seoul into policies it desires, as it leans closer to Pyongyang.

Geo-economic Development Plans for the Russian Far East

Russia has approved many programs for the development of the Russian Far East, each aimed at reducing its dependence on natural resource exports and attracting investments from foreign companies. Repeatedly, there has been talk of cooperation with South Korea and Japan in order to make these plans successful. Accompanying these proposals there have been administrative reorganization and suggestions for modernization reforms, but the fundamental problems of the area remain. Only China has persevered enough to take a big stake in cross-border agreements and trade with the area (without much investment) as others have kept trying without a lot to show for it. Yet, reservations remain about how much to open Siberia and the Russian Far East to Chinese investment in energy (until recently restrictions were tighter than for others) and how much Chinese labor should be permitted into the area. In light of Russian restrictions and Chinese hesitation to invest in the areas where Russia is seeking capital, a fallback position is to focus on North Korea as a way out of Russia's dilemma. This is not a naive hope for bustling reform in North Korean, but a calculated strategy for infrastructure development in a country still loathe to opening up. South Korea's industrial parks do little for Russia. China's extraction of minerals and consumer goods trade also do little for it. A multilateral settlement with a suspicious Pyongyang willing to relax controls only to the extent that its territory would be used as a corridor and some of the energy and funds would flow to it is Russia's goal.

Incentives have not brought the bountiful results for the Russian Far East that Russians for more than two decades insisted were within reach and then complained were being denied.²⁶ Japan and South

26. Gilbert Rozman, "The Crisis of the Russian Far East: Who Is to Blame?"

Korea as well as the United States did not invest nearly as much as had once been anticipated. China has shown considerable interest, but much less willingness to invest. President Medvedev's modernization thinking never became the basis of policy, and the huge sums spent on the Vladivostok APEC summit in 2012 were just one more Potemkin village in a country awash in oil and gas money. That leaves as the way forward without ceding the area to Chinese capital and labor a long-discussed scheme of north-south corridors, respectful of Russia's nuclear superpower status so it will not be ignored, welcoming to its energy superpower status in recognition of both North Korea's needs and the region's closest supplies, and attentive to a transportation partner able to realize its Eurasian identity as the natural bridge between two oceans.

The Rason-Khasan railroad, planned as early as 2001, is now transporting Russian coal to a North Korean port, from which it is shipped to South Korea. The volume of shipments remains too low to recoup expenses, but Russian hopes are high that the expansion of economic ties will lead to an increase in mutual trust, conducive to stability in North-South relations (i.e., the North toning down its bellicose language and the South becoming more generous in its developmental assistance) and later to progress on questions of security. This confidence-building and crisis-resolving sequence is duplicitous, since the outcome Russia seeks in economic transformation and security as well as reunification is a stronger North able to oblige the South to accept the North's terms for reconciliation and a regional order as well as a regional approach to values opposed to Seoul's intentions. Economic projects presented as in line with globalization are really targeted at a new global order opposed to what has been championed with "Global Korea." Indeed, the Eurasian Initiative is perceived to be an approach that outsources to Russia economic projects to revive North Korea in a manner Russia desires, regardless of

Problems of Post-Communism 44, no. 5 (1997), pp. 3-12; Gilbert Rozman, "Strategic Thinking about the Russian Far East: A Resurgent Russia Eyes Its Future in Northeast Asia," *Problems of Post-Communism* 55, no. 1 (2008), pp. 36-48.

the intentions of South Korean officials.

Russia, along with China, views geo-economics increasingly through the prism of megaprojects, centering on transportation arteries and energy pipelines. China's projects are largely east-west, ambitiously connecting the various regions of Asia and even Asia and Europe. Russia's east-west projects to countries in the EU have encountered strong resistance and its east-west blueprint for the EEC remains hard to decipher with little prospect of funding in the near future, but it is doubling down on its north-south projects through the Korean Peninsula as the focus of diplomacy in Northeast Asia. Talks with Japan, which were promoted in 2013-2014, are moribund for now, and talks with South Korea on its direct role in the Russian Far East or even its NAPCI proposal draw scant interest. Rather, Russia shows interest in its Eurasian Initiative primarily as a rubric for realizing its own north-south agenda, sharply at odds with Park Geun-hye's conditional "trustpolitik." While Obama firmly opposes *byungjin* and Park looks at it skeptically without steps toward reconciliation, Putin essentially embraces *byungjin* as a transitional approach. In this respect, he puts less weight on economic reform and denuclearization than Xi Jinping has of late. He also is more impatient for Park to improve ties with Kim Jong-un, since it is assumed that the Russian Far East would be a principal beneficiary — parallel corridors would be constructed east-west to Shinuiju and on to Northeast China and north-south to Rason and on to the Russian Far East with South Korean development assistance in the lead, the latter becoming one of Russia's major links to the Asia-Pacific region.

Conclusion

Some in Russia and South Korea consider Russia's increased engagement with North Korea benign and even promising. If others cannot convince the North to agree to denuclearize, Russia's more sympathetic approach is worth trying, since it is seen as committed to this goal. If others are hesitant about economic overtures to North Korea,

as debates about shifting in that direction gain momentum, Russia has taken the lead. In 2015 no country appears to be as confident as Russia that it knows how to change the calculus in Pyongyang, according to its current self-serving narrative. The fact that South Korea disagrees is taken as evidence it prefers regime change.

Russia seeks regime change in South Korea (a progressive agenda generously to assist North Korea's development and distance the country from the United States), not North Korea. It champions reunification, but along lines favored by the North (no democracy, preservation of the North's political elite in power, an end to the U.S. alliance). Rather than economic integration centered on South Korean investment in the Russian Far East or North Korea removing barriers to market forces, Russians focus on the revival of North Korea's economy through big, state-centered projects.

Russians insist that their country is the most supportive of Korean reunification. It would benefit most economically. It is least interested in gaining dominance over the North or in using a unified Korea for regional dominance. Moreover, Russia is the country least interested in imposing its own values. Arguing that the reason the six-party talks have failed and Pyongyang has gone further along the path of missile and nuclear weapons development is because the overall security framework in the region has been left to fester and worsen, Russian specialists find the answer in new security assurances to Pyongyang and a new regional security architecture. Just as NATO and U.S. hegemonism are the reputed cause of destabilization in Europe, the trilateral U.S.-Japan-ROK alliances are blamed for Pyongyang's defensive measures and for obliging Russia as well as China to take defensive measures of their own. It is not North Korea's missile threat that is leading to a ballistic missile defense system under U.S. leadership, but that system that is driving the North to increase its arms at the same time as it is driving China and Russia toward a continental regrouping, in which North Korea's inclusion is more seriously contemplated. The maritime alliances and partnerships that are turning into a "NATO of the East" are blamed for blocking denuclearization, reunification, and, above all, peace in Northeast Asia.

While some argue that preventing *byungjin* and securing a clear commitment to denuclearization are necessary for the resumption of the six-party talks, among those who disagree, including the mainstream in Russia, one finds justification in a different set of assumptions about how to get denuclearization. Behind these views, however, is usually a lower priority for denuclearization and aspirations to convert the six-party talks into a broader set of negotiations over the regional order and the type of reunification that is desired. Russia is taking the lead in using North Korea as a means to pursue goals other than denuclearization. Its diplomacy has shifted from Seoul and also Tokyo, increasingly sources of disappointment, to Pyongyang, a pawn in Russia's "turn to Asia," playing a weak hand and harboring deep hostility to the United States and its allies. Settling on unfavorable trends in regional security and the threat from U.S.-led alliances and pressure over values as the explanation for the North's recalcitrance, Moscow has projected its own grievances onto the peninsula and associated its cause for countering the United States with Pyongyang's struggle. It simplifies the argument by ignoring any negative behavior of the North Korean government, by dismissing any intentions by it to maintain nuclear weapons after the regional security situation is resolved, and by assuming that it is amenable to reunification without attempting regime change in South Korea. Russian arguments are as simplistic and self-serving as were Soviet arguments during the Cold War.

Kim Jong-un has not agreed to Putin's strategy even if it is more appealing than Xi's. His decision to not travel to Moscow for the May 9 celebrations may be a result of internal factors or to concern that his presence would be overshadowed by the presence of other leaders and the combined pressure of Putin and Xi, but it also may be linked to disappointment that Putin is unwilling to further his own strategy for more armaments or would have to backtrack if the visit were followed by missile tests and, perhaps coinciding with the 70th anniversary date the North celebrates on August 15 or the 70th anniversary of the ruling party on October 10, a nuclear test. There is no reason to anticipate a change of course by Moscow due to Kim's

absence. As, in the case of Beijing, it has a long-term strategy, awaiting Pyongyang's decision. Kim still finds Moscow welcoming as he considers the triangle with Beijing as well.

What has shifted for Moscow in 2014, as in Beijing in 2009, is the framework used for interpreting developments related to North Korea. In this 70th anniversary year North Korea is perceived in a broad historical context; the spoils of war and the sacrifices of Cold War support now overshadow the promise of regional amity. The historical dimension of national identity is in the forefront, not just because of the way Ukraine and Japan are being depicted. The civilizational factor is accentuated too, as Washington and its allies are seen as threatening another "color revolution" through regime change in North Korea. Not least of all, the international relations dimension of hegemonism and the U.S.-centered international order looms large in reasoning that makes North Korea the ultimate barrier to NATO of the East edging close to what was long seen as China's industrial heartland and what is nervously seen as Russia's fragile foothold on the Pacific. National identity may have earlier been concealed in arguments about North Korea steeped in claims of international responsibility or, at more candid moments, of national interests. While the debate continues in China, leaving some uncertainty about how much national identity has gained primacy, the debate is settled in Russia amid insistence on a new cold war.

One factor giving hope to Russia is that progressives could return to power in Seoul more amenable to *byungjin* and opposed to U.S. policies toward North Korea. They may start with a different historical perspective, more sympathetic to the plight of North Korea and to Russia as a partner offering hope for a third way without the United States or China gaining dominance and forcing South Korea into one-sided dependence. Encouraged in this manner, Russians feel more emboldened to apply pressure on the Park administration and lead the way in incentives to Kim Jong-un.

Russia is increasingly encouraging North Korea and pressuring South Korea with the implicit threat of tilting further to the North if recent policy, such as Park Geun-hye's snubbing of Putin's invitations,

is not changed. While the North Koreans are playing Moscow off against Beijing, the old “northern triangle” is more complicated than that. Russia’s “turn to China” and Pyongyang’s need for Beijing are likely to put Beijing in the driver’s seat in the next stages of diplomatic maneuvers. This outcome may not have been welcomed by Russia when it was more confident of its economic clout and more hopeful about its multipolar diplomacy with Japan or even South Korea, but now that it sees the world through the lens of a new cold war, making common cause with China in opposition to the United States and its allies is a desirable outcome. Many in Northeast Asia are slow to awaken to this new reality.

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Chinese Attitudes toward Korean Unification*

Bonnie S. Glaser and Yun Sun

Although China officially supports unification of the Korean Peninsula, it essentially maintains a two Koreas policy. Beijing sustains this approach because even as the burdens and dangers of the status quo on the peninsula increase, it judges that the risks of unification are potentially greater. Nevertheless, China's growing economic and political clout along with the strengthening of its ties with South Korea are boosting Beijing's confidence that it can protect Chinese interests regardless of developments on the peninsula. The more permissible environment in recent years regarding discussion of Chinese policy toward the Koreas has engendered a robust debate among Chinese researchers about the potential costs and benefits for China of Korean unification. The ROK and the U.S. should consider ways to influence China's cost/benefit calculus regarding Korean unification. No single step is likely to alter China's approach, but an accumulation of measures aimed at easing Chinese fears and reducing the uncertainties associated with unification could have an impact on Chinese thinking and policies over time.

Keywords: China, Korean unification, Chinese interests in Korea, Chinese policy toward Korea, China's role in Korean unification

Introduction

A core component of South Korean President Park Geun-hye's policy is to establish the foundation for the peaceful unification of Korea. In a speech marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II and the liberation of Korea, President Park emphasized the benefits of "a Korea made whole" and called on all Koreans to "stand together and prepare for unification." Achieving this vision will undoubtedly

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require the acceptance and cooperation of North Korea.¹ Another key player in the process is China, which remains North Korea's largest benefactor, propping up the Kim regime with foodstuffs, energy supplies and consumer goods.² Understanding that Beijing can play an important role in either forestalling or realizing Seoul's dream of unification, Park has set out to enhance South Korea's ties with China.

Although China officially supports unification of the Korean Peninsula, it essentially maintains a two Koreas policy. Under Xi Jinping, Beijing's ties with the Republic of Korea (ROK) are playing an increasingly important role in China's regional political, diplomatic and economic strategies. Strains in Sino-North Korean relations are evident and may be deepening, but China is nonetheless unwilling to abandon its historic relationship with Pyongyang. North Korea's persistent efforts to develop nuclear weapons and long-range missiles pose direct challenges to Chinese interests and have led a growing number of Chinese experts to argue that their only treaty ally is a strategic liability rather than a strategic asset. However, influential voices remain convinced that Chinese interests are best served by the division of the Korean Peninsula, in part because of deep suspicions of American intentions and role on the peninsula in a unified Korea. So far, China's cost-benefit calculus favors perpetuation of the status quo. There is no sign that Xi Jinping is genuinely willing to accept, let alone promote, a unified Korea.

Drawing on official Chinese statements, articles by Chinese scholars and officials, and author interviews, this paper analyzes evolving Chinese attitudes toward the unification of the Korean Peninsula. The paper begins by explaining China's official position on Korean

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1. "Commemorative Address by President Park Geun-hye on the 70th Anniversary of Liberation," August 15, 2015, [http://english1.president.go.kr/activity/speeches.php?srh\[board_no\]=24&srh\[view_mode\]=detail&srh\[seq\]=11748&srh\[detail_no\]=43](http://english1.president.go.kr/activity/speeches.php?srh[board_no]=24&srh[view_mode]=detail&srh[seq]=11748&srh[detail_no]=43).
 2. James Reilly, "The Curious Case of China's Aid to North Korea," *Asian Survey* 54, no. 6 (2014), p. 1170. According to one report published in 2012, China provides 100,000 tons of food, 500,000 tons of fuel, and goods worth USD 20 million to North Korea every year. "Scale of Yearly Chinese Unconditional Aid to N.Korea Unveiled," *The Dong-A Ilbo*, June 24, 2012.

unification and Chinese interests on the Korean Peninsula. It then discusses Chinese debates about Korean unification, including the potential benefits and risks for China. Next, changes in Chinese relations with the U.S., South Korea and North Korea since 2013 are analyzed and the implications of Korean unification are assessed. The paper then examines China's views of various unification scenarios. Finally, suggestions are put forward on how to influence China's approach to unification going forward.

China's Official Position on Korean Unification

Beijing officially supports the unification of the Korean Peninsula under the condition that unification be "peaceful and independent."³ Generations of Chinese leaders beginning with Deng Xiaoping have endorsed Korean unification. In 1982, during a visit to North Korea, which was his last visit abroad, Deng expressed "resolute support to the efforts made by the Korean Workers' Party, the North Korean government and people for self-determined and peaceful unification."⁴ Chinese President Jiang Zemin made the same pledge in 2001 during a meeting with a senior North Korean delegation in Beijing.⁵ During his two terms as president, Hu Jintao also voiced Chinese support for the eventual unification of North and South Korea on various occasions, including in a speech to the South Korean General

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3. PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson answers questions on the election of Park Geun-hye as the 18th President of ROK" (in Chinese), December 20, 2012, http://www.gov.cn/xwfb/2012-12/20/content_2294873.htm Spokesperson Hua Chunying said: "China always supports the South and the North to improve their relations through dialogues, promote reconciliation and cooperation, and eventually achieve the independent and peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula."
 4. Meng Hong, "The several 'last times' of Deng Xiaoping" (in Chinese), *Deng Xiaoping Commemoration*, February 22, 2013, <http://dangshi.people.com.cn/n/2013/0222/c85037-20565770-3.html>.
 5. "Jiang Zemin: China adamantly supports the self-determined and peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula" (in Chinese), *Sina News*, July 10, 2001.

Assembly in 2005 and to American media in 2011 before his state visit to Washington.⁶ Chinese President Xi Jinping has also openly backed unification of the Korean Peninsula in two summits with President Park Geun-hye. During his landmark visit to Seoul in July 2014, Xi publicly praised the “Trust-building Process advocated by President Park” and stated that China “supports the improvement of relations between the South and the North in order to achieve reconciliation and cooperation, which will eventually lead to self-determined and peaceful unification.”⁷

Whether China genuinely backs unification or only pays lip service to this position is uncertain. After all, China remains a divided country itself and views the eventual reunification of Mainland China and Taiwan as an “irreversible trend of history,”⁸ so Beijing has little choice but to support Korea’s unification.⁹ Moreover, since Seoul and Pyongyang both seek unification, opposing their national aspirations would be contrary to Chinese interests in preserving amicable ties with both sides.

There is broad recognition among Chinese experts and officials that unification of the Korean Peninsula is inevitable someday. However, there is no expectation that unification will take place in the near term. Chinese analysts believe that Xi Jinping is personally committed to the eventual unification of the Peninsula in principle, but the timeframe and conditions have yet to be worked out and there is no sense of urgency in Beijing to expedite the process.¹⁰ Chinese

6. “Hu Jintao delivered speech at the South Korean General Assembly: China supports the self-determined and peaceful reunification of North Korea and South Korea” (in Chinese), *China News*, November 17, 2005; “President Hu Jintao’s Written Interview with the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*” (in Chinese), *Renmin Ribao*, January 18, 2011.

7. “Xi’s Lecture at Seoul National University” (in Chinese), Xinhua, July 5, 2014. http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2014-07/05/c_126713142_2.htm.

8. “Full text of Hu Jintao’s report at the 18th Party Congress,” Xinhua, November 17, 2012. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/special/18cpnc/2012-11/17/c_131981259.htm.

9. Interview with a Chinese scholar, Beijing, December 2012.

10. Interview with a Chinese scholar, Beijing, May 2015.

researchers deny that Beijing is a key player in the unification of the Peninsula, arguing instead that only the two Koreas can determine their joint future.¹¹ At the same time, however, they insist that it is China's responsibility to prevent any premature attempt to achieve unification before arrangements are agreed upon that ensure that the national interests of both Koreas and China are adequately protected.¹²

Chinese Interests on the Korean Peninsula

Beijing has three priority interests on the Korean Peninsula: maintaining peace, preserving stability, and promoting denuclearization. These key interests are enshrined in Beijing's "no war, no instability, no nukes" (*buzhan, buluan, wuhe*) policy.¹³ Preventing conflict ranks above all other interests and is the result of the painful memories of the Korean War, which cost hundreds of thousands of Chinese lives and led to a stronger U.S. commitment to Taiwan's security. The Chinese leadership fears that another military conflict would severely impede China's economic development and damage its relatively advantageous international strategic environment.¹⁴

The second key priority is the preservation of stability on the Peninsula. Beijing fears that instability in North Korea, generated by an economic or political emergency, could lead to massive North Korean refugee flows into China, resulting in a humanitarian crisis and social instability. Furthermore, instability in North Korea could precipitate U.S. military intervention, especially if the U.S. judges North Korean weapons of mass destruction (WMD) facilities to be insecure.

11. Interview with a Chinese scholar, Beijing, January 2013.

12. Interview with a Chinese scholar, Beijing, December 2012.

13. Bonnie Glaser and Brittany Billingsley, *Reordering Chinese Priorities on the Korean Peninsula*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 2012, p. 1.

14. Bonnie S. Glaser, "China's Policy in the Wake of the Second DPRK Nuclear Test," *China Security* 5, no. 2 (2009), p. 37.

Although denuclearization is a key Chinese objective and has been elevated in importance by Xi Jinping, Chinese analysts maintain that avoiding war and maintaining stability on the Peninsula remain higher priorities.¹⁵ Beijing strongly opposes Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions and supports a nuclear-free Korea, but it only supports strategies of denuclearization that do not threaten peace and stability on the Peninsula.¹⁶

China worries that continued expansion of Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal may eventually compel South Korea, Japan and Taiwan to acquire nuclear weapons themselves in response.¹⁷ Nuclear proliferation around China's periphery as well as the ensuing risk of the breakdown of the Non-Proliferation Treaty would create severe security challenges for China. Such fears have increased with the growth of North Korea's nuclear arsenal. Top Chinese nuclear experts now estimate that North Korea may already have 20 nuclear warheads, and may be able to double its arsenal in 2016.¹⁸ Denuclearization of North Korea would eliminate the possibility that a unified Korea could have nuclear weapons, which is one of Beijing's many fears about unification.

Another Chinese interest that is not articulated by Chinese officials is that the Korean Peninsula is currently on amicable terms with China. An alignment by a government in either North or South Korea, or potentially a united Korea, with another nation for the purpose of bringing harm to China would pose a grave threat to Chinese interests. Whether China's interests could be protected under a unified Korea is a question that will be discussed below.

15. Interview with a Chinese scholar, Beijing, May 2014.

16. Glaser and Billingsley, *Reordering Chinese Priorities on the Korean Peninsula*, p. 2.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Jeremy Page and Jay Solomon, "China Warns North Korean Nuclear Threat is Rising," *Wall Street Journal*, April 22, 2015.

Benefits and Risks of Korean Unification

Chinese Korea experts have long debated various aspects of the security situation on the Korean Peninsula, including whether unification would advance or harm Chinese interests. Since the North conducted its first nuclear test in 2006, the Chinese leadership has permitted more open debate about North Korea and Chinese strategic priorities on the Korean Peninsula, including allowing the publication of a range of Chinese opinions on the matter.¹⁹ The lifting of some of the restrictions on openly discussing a previously taboo subject has provided a new window into Chinese thinking about the potential benefits and challenges that Korean unification would pose.

Potential Benefits

Although Chinese experts don't rule out the possibility of unification led by North Korea, they recognize that unification under Seoul's leadership is more likely. The most immediate benefit to China of Korean unification led by the South would almost certainly be the alleviation of the political and security pressures caused by Pyongyang's belligerence and development of nuclear weapons.²⁰ Indeed, the growing threat from North Korea in recent years has provided an impetus for strengthening U.S. alliances with both Korea and Japan and enhancing the American military presence in Northeast Asia, which China views as damaging to its national security. As long as China fails to prevent North Korea's dangerous nuclear/missile tests and conventional provocations, the U.S. has legitimate grounds to increase

19. Jonathan D. Pollack, "Is Xi Jinping Rethinking Korean Unification?" The Brookings Institution, January 20, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/presentations/2015/01/20-xi-jinping-korean-unification-pollack>.

20. Ming Liu, "Korean Peninsula Division/Unification and China: From the Security Perspective of China," in *Korean Peninsula Division/Unification: From the International Perspective*. eds. Kyuryoon Kim and Jae-Jeok Park (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2012), pp. 61-63.

its security involvement in the region.²¹ The potential deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in South Korea is the most recent example of the increased threat to Chinese security resulting from Pyongyang's military advances.

Another major potential benefit of Korean unification for China is the reshaping of the security alliance between South Korea and the United States, and the possible eventual removal of American troops from the Peninsula. Chinese researchers believe that unification could end great power competition on the Peninsula and replace bloc politics with economic cooperation and trade.²² Furthermore, experts foresee that a united Korea would become an independent force that would forge equal and normal relationships with international powers, creating a more stable security situation in Northeast Asia.²³ In the long run, some Chinese analysts even predict the emergence of a China-South Korea alliance once China becomes a superpower.²⁴

Unification could also bring significant economic benefits to China's northeast provinces as well as to Inner Mongolia. Sharing a border with a backward and isolated North Korea has impeded economic development in China's northeast region. According to one estimate, peaceful unification of the two Koreas could increase the gross domestic product (GDP) of northeast China, including Jilin, Liaoning and Heilongjiang provinces, by around RMB one trillion, or roughly USD 162.6 billion.²⁵ Chinese companies would benefit from the investment opportunities in infrastructure and public works projects as well as by serving the expanded Korean market. Essentially, China would

21. "China Will Benefit Rather Than Lose by Helping South Korea Achieve Unification of the Peninsula" (in Chinese), *LianHeZaoBao*, June 27, 2013.

22. Zhang Liangui, "Reunification of the Korean Peninsula and China" (in Chinese), China Academy of Social Sciences, <http://yataisuo.cass.cn/Bak/ddyt/0405-3.htm>.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Chen Dingding, "Is a China-South Korea Alliance Possible," *The Diplomat*, July 8, 2014.

25. Jin Jingyi, "Unification of Koreas to Benefit Neighbors: Experts," *Global Times (Huanqiu Shibao)*, September 17, 2014.

profit from what President Park has referred to as the “unification bonanza.”²⁶ Unification would also greatly contribute to China’s “strategy to revitalize the industrial base in China’s northeast.”²⁷

In addition, the economic development of the entire Korean Peninsula could provide a boost to regional economic growth and cooperation, and promote closer economic cooperation between China and Korea.²⁸ Yang Xiyu from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ China Institute of International Studies suggests that a united Korea would create an extended market that could serve as a new external driving force for the development of China’s economy.²⁹ Moreover, if Korea were to reunite, China’s decades-long economic assistance to North Korea to prop up the Kim regime would finally come to an end. This would free up those resources for China’s own use. Although Chinese aid to North Korea remains a state secret, it is widely believed to be substantial, and has not been reduced significantly despite growing friction between the two countries in recent years. According to a 2012 report by a pro-Beijing Hong Kong newspaper, “every year China supplies the DPRK with 300,000 to 400,000 tons of food and 500,000 tons of crude oil.”³⁰

Peaceful unification of the two Koreas could also inject new momentum into China’s efforts to bring to an end to its own internal division. Chen Xiangyang of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) maintains that Korean unification would serve as a model for Mainland China’s unification with Taiwan.³¹ A successful Korean unification experience, Chen argues, could crucially inform China’s “One Country, Two Systems” approach

26. Ibid.

27. Zhang Liangui, “Reunification of the Korean Peninsula and China.”

28. Chen Xiangyang, “China’s Policy of Unification of the Korean Peninsula” (in Chinese), *Asia and Africa Review*, no. 5 (2012), pp. 21-24.

29. Yang Xiyu, “To Break Deadlock on the Korean Peninsula, What role for China and South Korea” (in Chinese), *Huanqiu Shibao*, March 3, 2014.

30. Shi Chun-yu, “China cannot pick up the tab for the DPRK’s nukes” (in Chinese), *Ta Kung Pao*, February 13, 2013.

31. Chen, “China’s Policy of Unification of the Korean Peninsula.”

to Taiwan and improve the prospects for peaceful unification of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.³²

Potential Risks

Most Chinese writings emphasize the potential risks of unification for Chinese security. The most frequently cited concern is the possible deployment of American troops north of the 38th parallel. North Korea is still regarded by many Chinese, especially by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), as a crucial buffer against military encroachment by the U.S. and the ROK.³³ In the event of serious instability in North Korea, Chinese experts worry that American troops, dispatched to the North for the purposes of securing WMD facilities and stabilizing the country, would become permanently stationed on China's border.

Another risk is that the fall of one of the few remaining socialist nations would pose challenges to the viability of China's own political system.³⁴ Although Xi Jinping is attempting to play down the importance of ideology in China's relationship with North Korea, the special ideological value of North Korea is nevertheless emphasized by some Chinese analysts. The continued presence of non-democratic regimes such as North Korea on its periphery psychologically reduces China's sense of vulnerability to perceived mounting U.S. pressure. Moreover, the preservation of common ideological bonds between the two governments, ensures that North Korea remains dependent on Beijing, which provides China with leverage over Pyongyang should the Chinese opt to use it. In the words of Chinese Korea specialist Li Dunqiu, "since the DPRK has a socialist political system, it can hardly have any other geopolitical choice than China."³⁵ Others dispute the

32. Ibid.

33. Interview with a Chinese scholar, Beijing, December 2012.

34. Chen, "China's Policy of Unification of the Korean Peninsula"; Yang Junfeng, "China should abandon the 'negative equity' North Korea" (in Chinese), *Financial Times*, July 7, 2014.

35. Li Dunqiu, "We cannot 'give up' the 65-year Partnership with North Korea" (in Chinese), *Huanqiu Shibao*, November 27, 2014.

ideological value of North Korea to China. Lieutenant General Wang Hongguang maintains, for example, that “the DPRK has long abandoned Marxism and Leninism as the guiding thought for its party building. It has nothing in common with China ideologically, and is neither a proletarian party nor a socialist country in the real sense.”³⁶ China and North Korea have therefore “no common goal, no common road.”³⁷ Assuming that the role of ideology in China’s policy toward North Korea further diminishes, concern about this factor will likely wane over time.

Korean unification may pose a particular risk to stability in north-east China. There are approximately 2 million ethnic Koreans living in China, most of whom reside in provinces bordering North Korea.³⁸ Chinese experts fear that ethnic Koreans could “display nationalist tendencies,”³⁹ and be more loyal to a new unified Korea than to Beijing.⁴⁰ If unification occurs as a result of a loss of political control in North Korea, it might result in a massive influx of North Korean refugees into China, which many Chinese fear would aggravate social and political tensions in the northeast.⁴¹ To avert this danger, one Chinese analyst proposed establishing a “quarantine zone” in the border region so that refugees could be interdicted before entering China.⁴²

Another worry is that a united Korea may exhibit extreme nationalism, which could introduce new strains into China-Korea relations.

36. Wang Hongguang, “No such thing as ‘abandoning the DPRK’ for China” (in Chinese), *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 1, 2014.

37. Ibid.

38. “The nationality issue of the Korean ethnic group after the anti-Japanese war: many chose Chinese nationality” (in Chinese), *Academic Journal of Yanbian University*, April 29, 2014, <http://nk.news.sohu.com/20140429/n398986026.shtml>.

39. Interviews with Chinese scholars, Beijing, April 2004 and June 2006.

40. Stephanie T. Kleine-Ahlbrandt, “Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Hearing on China’s Relations with North Korea,” June 5, 2014, p. 2. <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/USCC-Kleine-Ahlbrandt-China-DPRK-6-5-14.pdf>.

41. Ibid.

42. Fu Bo, “China’s Interest in the Korean Peninsula’s Reunification” (in Chinese), *21ccom*, January 2, 2014.

Chinese experts express concern that hyper Korean nationalism could lead unified Korea to compete with China for regional influence and prestige. This risk could be magnified in the event that a territorial dispute flares over the ancient Korean kingdom of Goguryeo, which, between the first century B.C. and the seventh century A.D., controlled land that would now include all of North Korea as well as contiguous territory in northeast China, along with parts of South Korea.⁴³

Another potential downside of unification is the possibility that a unified Korea could emerge as an economic powerhouse and a major political player, thereby altering the balance of power in Northeast Asia. Some Chinese experts suggest that unification could create an inflated sense of Korea's importance that could undermine China's efforts to establish itself as the dominant power in Asia.⁴⁴ Countering this view, a minority of academics, including Professor Yan Xuetong from Qinghua University, argues that a unified Korea will serve as a bulwark against Japan, but will be unable to challenge China meaningfully owing to its status as a "global power."⁴⁵

The economic implications of unification are still being debated. After unification, Korean investment in China may decline as Seoul reallocates that money to the northern portion of the Peninsula. This could negatively affect the Chinese economy.⁴⁶ Direct investment by Korean companies in China reached almost USD 4 billion in 2014, up 29.8 percent over 2013,⁴⁷ bringing total South Korean direct investment in China to USD 69.6 billion, 52.5 percent of the nation's total external investment.⁴⁸ China's existing investments in North Korea

43. Kleine-Ahlbrandt, "Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission," p. 2.

44. Interview with Chinese analysts, Beijing, December 2012.

45. Yan Xuetong, "A Glimpse on South Koreans' Attitudes toward Reunification from Their Distorted Report," *Global Times* (Huanqiu Shibao), February 10, 2011.

46. Interviews with Chinese experts, Beijing, April 2004 and June 2006.

47. Korea's Investment in China Jumps 29.8 pct in 2014," *The Korea Times*, January 16, 2015.

48. "China emerges as S. Korea's No. 2 Investment Destination," Yonhap News Agency, May 7, 2015.

could face uncertainty as well. Seventy percent of Chinese investments in the North are concentrated in resource development projects. For example, Jilin Province has secured rights to accessing the iron ore mines in the Musan County of DPRK's North Hamgyong Province for the next 50 years.⁴⁹ Deals that provide China access to Rajin Port, located on the border of North Korea and Russia, as well as the port of Chongjin in Hamgyong Province, which enable China to ship cargo out of its landlocked northeast provinces and have strategic implications, might be voided.

China's Evolving Relations with the U.S., South Korea, and North Korea

In his meeting with President Obama at Sunnylands in 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for the establishment of a new model of major power relations with the United States.⁵⁰ The following year, Xi underscored the need to avoid the "Thucydides trap" in which a rising power inspires fear in a prevailing power, resulting in war.⁵¹ Under this framework, the Korean Peninsula is considered an opportunity for U.S.-China cooperation to prevent "conflict and confrontation."⁵² Indeed, China's stronger emphasis on denuclearization and willingness to apply greater pressure on North Korea than in the past are interpreted by Chinese analysts as aimed at strengthening cooperation with the United States.⁵³

49. Yu, "Strategy and Prospects for China Regarding a Unified Korean Peninsula."

50. John Podesta, C.H. Tung, Samuel R. Berger, and Wang Jisi, *Toward a New Model of Major Power Relations*, Center for American Progress, December 2013, <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/China-Report-Topper.pdf>.

51. Nicolas Berggruen and Nathan Gardels, "How the World's Most Powerful Leader Thinks," *Huffington Post*, January 21, 2014.

52. "Xinmin Global Forum on the Korean Peninsula" (in Chinese), *Xinmin*, November 6, 2014.

53. Interview with Chinese scholar, Beijing, February 2013.

Nevertheless, Chinese experts bear no illusion that the new model of major power relations will eliminate the competitive nature of Sino-American relations, especially in East Asia. They anticipate that the U.S. will continue to view China as a strategic competitor and will not agree to reduce its strategic presence in Northeast Asia, including its military alliance with South Korea, unless Seoul insists. As long as North Korea exists and poses a military threat to the South, there is virtually no possibility that U.S. force presence will be reduced. Whether U.S. forces would remain after unification is a major Chinese concern. Building closer ties between China and South Korea is seen as a means to exert influence on this outcome.

China-South Korean relations have made positive strides since Xi Jinping and Park Geun-hye became presidents of their respective nations in 2013. Presidents Xi and Park exchanged state visits and accorded priority to promoting Sino-ROK relations, reversing the negative trend that marked the previous Lee Myung-bak administration, according to Chinese analysts.⁵⁴ In June 2013, Xi and Park announced that their two nations would establish a strategic cooperative partnership. Economic complementarity is an important driver of the bilateral relationship. The two countries signed a free trade agreement in June 2015 that is expected to boost bilateral trade to over USD 300 billion a year. Shared concerns in China and South Korea about Japan's whitewashing of the history of Japanese imperialism in Asia are seen by China as an opportunity to forge closer ties.⁵⁵ Chinese experts regard South Korea as the "new model" for China's periphery diplomacy and the "new example" of peaceful coexistence among Asian countries.⁵⁶

In contrast to warming Sino-ROK relations, China's relationship with North Korea has experienced significant deterioration in the past two years. Ignoring stern warnings from Beijing, North Korea

54. Interviews with Chinese scholars, Beijing, May 2014.

55. Chen Xiangyang, "Firmly grasp the strategic initiative in Northeast Asia" (in Chinese), *Guojijiwang*, August 4, 2014.

56. "Xinmin Global Forum on the Korean Peninsula" (in Chinese), *Xinmin*, November 6, 2014.

conducted its third nuclear test in 2013.⁵⁷ The unexpected execution of Jang Sung-taek later that year set off alarm bells in China about the purging of China-friendly factions inside North Korea.⁵⁸ In 2014, North Korea sought to improve ties with Russia as part of a larger effort to diversify its foreign relations. China viewed Pyongyang's gambit as a renewed attempt to break away from Chinese influence.⁵⁹ North Korea's actions have caused great displeasure in Beijing and produced a series of Chinese policy adjustments: China unprecedentedly elevated "denuclearization" to the top of its stated goals on the Korean Peninsula in its public statements;⁶⁰ Beijing took steps to more strictly implement some of the UN sanction resolutions on North Korea;⁶¹ and exchanges of senior visits came to a halt. Most significantly, more than three years after Kim Jong-un took power, he has not yet visited China, and Xi Jinping has not expressed interest in visiting North Korea.⁶² Xi's visit in July 2015 to China's Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, which borders North Korea — the first by a Chinese head of state in eight years — signaled the priority he attaches to the region's economic development, but does not necessarily suggest a shift in policy toward Pyongyang.

According to Chinese analysts, China's change of heart on North Korea is in large part driven by Xi Jinping personally. Unlike his predecessors, Xi has little tolerance for smaller countries' blatant defiance of China and disregard for Chinese national interests. While Kim Jong-un's provocations have not matched the audacity of his father's sinking

57. "China cherishes Sino-North Korea friendship, North Korea needs to cherish it as well" (in Chinese), *Huanqiu Shibao*, February 6, 2013.

58. Interview with Chinese scholar, Beijing, May 2014.

59. "North Korea Sends Special Envoy to Russia to Break Isolation" (in Chinese), *Xinjingbao*, November 18, 2014.

60. "Li Keqiang: China advocates for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and the maintenance of the long-term peace and stability of the peninsula and Northeast Asia" (in Chinese), *Renmin Ribao*, November 13, 2014.

61. Daniel Salisbury, "China Strengthens Stance on North Korean Exports," *Project Alpha*, September 26, 2013; "Seoul: China Strengthens Resolve against North Korea Nuclear Test," *Voice of America*, March 28, 2014.

62. Interviews with Chinese scholars, Beijing, May 2015.

of the Cheonan and attack on Yeongpyeong Island, young Kim has failed both to adequately explain his actions to Beijing and to show due respect to China's positions.⁶³ Pyongyang's insolence has revealed Xi Jinping's inability to rein in North Korea's dangerous behavior and thus damaged the Chinese leader's prestige internationally.⁶⁴

China's changing relations with North and South Korea, and growing Chinese confidence in their ability to shape a favorable strategic environment, have intensified debates about whether abandoning North Korea would be more advantageous.⁶⁵ So far, however, there is no consensus in support of a fundamental shift in Chinese policy. Although Xi Jinping has become increasingly irritated with North Korea, his displeasure does not alter Chinese strategic interests in sustaining the North Korean regime. Moreover, Beijing's improved ties with South Korea and its understanding with the U.S. on building a new model of major power relations are not significant enough to alter China's outlook on the potential challenges posed to China's national interests by a unified Korea. In the absence of reassurances about the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance and American force presence in a unified Korea, China is not certain that the endgame will be in China's favor and therefore does not see any incentive to pursue changes to the status quo.

In the view of Chinese analysts, if South Korea is eager to enlist Chinese cooperation in support of Korean unification, Seoul needs to provide guarantees that Chinese interests will not be harmed in the process.⁶⁶ This includes the positioning of Korea to be more equidistant between China and the U.S., if not closer to Beijing, and creating an acceptable "arrangement" regarding the future U.S. role on the Peninsula.⁶⁷ The Chinese are undertaking efforts to influence South Korean thinking and policy in this regard. Expressions of concern by

63. Interviews with Chinese scholars, Beijing, November 2013.

64. *Ibid.*

65. The most prominent example is Deng Yuwen, "China Should Abandon North Korea," *Financial Times*, February 27, 2013.

66. Interviews with Chinese scholars, Beijing, November 2013.

67. *Ibid.*

Chinese Defense Minister Chang Wanquan to Seoul about the possible deployment of THAAD in South Korea is a case in point.⁶⁸ When Chinese officials say that the U.S. is the most important variable in resolving the Korea issue, they imply more than the need for the U.S. to engage North Korea in a dialogue on peaceful and diplomatic normalization. The embedded message to Seoul is that China's support for unification depends on whether the U.S.-ROK military alliance will be dissolved or restructured, including the withdrawal or significant reduction of U.S. troops deployed on the Peninsula.

Chinese Views of Unification Scenarios

As noted above, official Chinese policy statements consistently assert that Beijing's support for Korean unification is contingent on two conditions. First, the process must be peaceful. China objects to unification that is achieved by the use of force. Most Chinese experts envision a lengthy process of North-South talks that produces a permanent peace agreement and resolves the nuclear issue as part of a comprehensive mutual security arrangement.⁶⁹ Second, unification must be independent or self-determined, which means that it is achieved voluntarily by the two Koreas, without any outside influence.⁷⁰ China insists that Korea's future is foremost a matter for Koreans to resolve by themselves.⁷¹ With these two conditions in mind, Chinese analysts rule out three unification scenarios as unacceptable to Beijing:

68. "China Voices Concern about US Missile Defense in South Korea," *Agence France-Presse*, February 4, 2015.

69. Interviews with Chinese scholars, Beijing, 2012.

70. Spokesperson Hua Chunying said: "China always supports the South and the North to improve their relations through dialogues, promote reconciliation and cooperation, and eventually achieve the independent and peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula." PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson answers questions on the election of Park Geun-hye as the 18th President of ROK"

71. Pollack, "Is Xi Jinping Rethinking Korean Unification?"

1. Not peaceful and not independent. China opposes unification through the use of force either by North Korea and/or by the U.S. and the ROK.
2. Peaceful but not independent: China opposes unification through absorption that is against the will of one of the two Koreas, and possibly under the influence of external actors.
3. Not peaceful but independent: China opposes unification achieved through the use of force, but without the involvement of any external actor.⁷²

The means by which unification is achieved is of critical importance from China's perspective because different modes of unification would create different arrangements on the Peninsula, and thus bring about different consequences for China's national security and strategic interests.

In a unification by force scenario, a military confrontation between the two Koreas would result in one party defeating the other. Chinese analysts doubt that North Korea would attack the South at the current stage, since it would likely end in its demise. Chinese experts believe that a South Korean attempt to unify by force would be backed by the U.S. and would likely succeed if China chooses not to intervene.⁷³ This scenario is seen as undesirable by China for several reasons:

- China might be compelled to intervene to fulfill its treaty obligations, depending on the nature of the contingency.⁷⁴ Involvement in

72. Chinese experts view this scenario as unlikely due to the existence of the U.S.-ROK military alliance.

73. None of the experts interviewed view as feasible a scenario in which the ROK invades the North without U.S. support and involvement. Interview with Chinese scholars, Beijing, December 2012.

74. Article II of the 1961 "Sino-North Korean Mutual Aid and Cooperation Friendship Treaty" states "In the event of one of the Contracting Parties being subjected to the armed attack by any state or several states jointly and thus being involved in a state of war, the other Contracting Party shall immediately render military and other assistance by all means at its disposal." Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance between the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Chinese experts privately say that Beijing has repeatedly asked Pyongyang to excise this

a war would set back China's economic development and delay attainment of the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation.

- If both the U.S. and China are involved in the conflict, this could lead to a major military confrontation between the two largest powers in the region. Prolonged hostility between the U.S. and China would be the likely outcome.
- If China did not intervene, Pyongyang would be out-numbered, out-witted and out-powered. If it is pushed into a corner, North Korea might not refrain from suicidal moves, including use of nuclear weapons.
- Even if South Korea/U.S. defeats North Korea/China in the end, the war would leave the Peninsula in complete ruin.
- A Korea that is reunified by force with the help of the United States is likely to be part of the U.S. alliance system.

In a unification by absorption scenario, either the North or South would take over the other Korea and assimilate it into the existing political, economic and social system of the dominant Korea. Chinese analysts believe that the only realistic absorption scenario is that which is dominated and driven by South Korea. Moreover, the most probable catalyst for unification by absorption is an implosion or a collapse of the North Korean regime.⁷⁵ The best example of this scenario is the "German model," in which East Germany was assimilated by West Germany in 1990.⁷⁶

Chinese experts think that unification by absorption is the model preferred by South Korea and the U.S. They also contend that Washington and Seoul perceive China as the main obstacle to realizing the absorption of the North by the South due to its policy of propping up the North Korean regime. However, Chinese analysts widely challenge the fundamental assumptions on which the preference for the "German

clause from the treaty, but North Korea has refused. These experts believe that China would intervene militarily only if it judged that doing so was essential to protect Chinese security. Interviews with Chinese scholars, Beijing and Washington DC, 2009-10.

75. Interview with Chinese scholar, Beijing, December 2012.

76. Wang Linchang, "Why is the Reunification of the Korean Peninsula so Difficult?" *Global Times (Huanqiu Shibao)*, March 4, 2011.

model" is based. The majority view holds that:

- North Korea is not likely to collapse. The sustainability of North Korea, including the viability and legitimacy of the Kim Jong-un regime, is in fact stronger than the West had predicted.
- If China does not continue to assure North Korea's survival, a weak and isolated Pyongyang will seek retaliation against all parties, including China.
- South Korea is neither financially nor psychologically ready for unification by absorption. Chinese analysts question whether Seoul can afford the astronomical costs associated with the assimilation of North Korea.⁷⁷

The idea of promoting regime change in North Korea is anathema to Beijing because it is contrary to China's long-standing position that all nations' sovereignty and integrity must be respected. Moreover, regime change would likely involve military conflict that could potentially escalate to an all-out war.

Since China objects to unification achieved through force, absorption, or regime change, the only path to unification that Beijing favors is a mutually acceptable integration negotiated by North and South Korea. Chinese experts foresee a prolonged process of economic cooperation and social exchanges that lay the foundation for economic integration and eventual political dialogue about unification. This approach will bring minimum disruption and create *de facto* unification of the two entities through equitable participation. Chinese experts maintain that the high economic complementarity between the North and the South is a solid foundation on which to create economic interdependence. The abundant capital and advanced technology of South Korea, if combined with rich North Korean natural and labor resources, would stimulate rapid growth for both and in turn foster a common

77. South Korea's Finance Ministry estimated in early 2013 that unification could cost the South up to 7% of annual GDP for a decade. In 2014, 7% of South Korea's GDP was KRW 99.2 trillion (USD 88.2 billion). Christine Kim, "Korean Unification May Cost South 7 Percent of GDP: ministry," Reuters, January 1, 2013.

identity of "one Korea." Engagement efforts such as increasing South Korean investments in the North and permitting North Korean labor flows to the South, in China's view, are all good starting points for such integration. The key obstacle is how to ease mutual political hostility and set aside the nuclear issue so that engagement can begin.

Although China has a clear preference for the peaceful and independent unification through negotiation scenario, realizing this outcome is not China's top priority on the Peninsula and it cannot be achieved by China alone. Progress toward this goal must be made by the two Koreas and the current state of North-South relations does not bode well for substantial improvement in the near-term. President Park Geun-hye's "trustpolitik" policy, which emphasizes inter-Korean trust building, signifies goodwill toward North Korea, according to Chinese experts. But Kim Jong-un's response to Park's overtures has been erratic, and he has not embraced a process that could lead to integration with the South. Meanwhile, despite Seoul's desire for better relations with China, President Park's commitment to the U.S.-ROK alliance remains firm, and the U.S. and South Korea have shown no sign of reducing the intensity of their joint military preparedness. From China's perspective, the foundation for a peaceful and independent process of unification based on economic integration does not yet exist. Any premature attempt to promote unification is judged to be dangerous and strategically unwise.

Influencing Chinese Policy

China's reluctance to abandon North Korea and genuinely support Korean unification is due to many factors. First, there is enormous uncertainty associated with unification and its implications for Chinese interests. In particular, the possibility that U.S. troops might be deployed north of the 38th parallel is an unacceptable risk. The nature of the U.S.-ROK alliance after unification is also unknown. Despite the fact that Chinese interests are in many ways being harmed by the perpetu-

ation of the status quo, the costs to China are mostly discernable and manageable. The threats to Chinese security under a unified Korea are unknown and potentially considerable. Whether Chinese interests can be protected under a unified Korea is unclear.

Second, even if China had confidence that its interests would not be undermined in a unified Korea, the transition to a new status quo carries risks. Except in the case of China's preferred scenario of a peaceful and independent negotiated integration of the two Koreas, the process of achieving unification is likely to be chaotic and involve instability that spills over North Korea's borders. Third, institutional constituencies in China that fiercely oppose any change in Chinese policy toward North Korea cannot be easily ignored. Xi Jinping needs the support of conservative elements in the PLA, who seek to preserve the military's revolutionary legacies and avoid new threats to Chinese security that many believe would result from unification. A portion of the CPC apparatus also remains staunchly committed to the friendship with North Korea that was sealed in blood and was once commonly referred to "as close as lips to teeth." The U.S. rebalance to Asia, which is widely viewed as an effort to strategically encircle China and contain its re-emergence as a great power has undoubtedly intensified the misgivings of these constituencies and their resistance to any change in China's two Koreas policy.

Despite these hurdles, it is nevertheless worth considering steps that could be taken to influence China's cost/benefit calculus regarding Korean unification. Developments in North Korea are unpredictable and could evolve in ways that make China's position on reunification an academic exercise at best. The Chinese themselves are concerned about the internal situation in North Korea, as noted in their 2015 Defense White Paper, which stated that "The Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia are shrouded in instability and uncertainty."⁷⁸ The need to prepare for potential contingencies, even if China views them

78. Information Office of the State Council, *China's Military Strategy*, May 26, 2015, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/26/content_20820628.htm.

as undesirable, is obvious. Even if there is no spontaneous internal upheaval in North Korea, a discussion should begin with China about planning unification. A strategy should be formulated aimed at persuading Beijing to stop propping up North Korea and prepare to work with the U.S. and the ROK to manage the attendant instability and bring about a new end-state in which Chinese interests are protected. No single step is likely to alter China's approach, but an accumulation of measures aimed at easing Chinese fears and reducing the uncertainties associated with unification could have an impact on Chinese thinking and policies over time. Steps that could be taken include:

- Offer quiet assurances to Beijing that if the North Korean regime collapses due to economic or political pressures, China will not have to bear the consequences by itself. If large numbers of refugees flood across the border into China, relief would be forthcoming from the international community. The United States, Japan and South Korea could promise to help cope with the humanitarian and security challenges that would arise if North Korea were to implode.
- Inform China about some details of U.S.-ROK planning in the event of various contingencies. Sharing with Beijing how the alliance would respond to instability in North Korea could reassure the Chinese about the alliance's intentions. A dialogue with Beijing could include pledges to not send U.S. troops close to North Korea's shared border with China. A division of responsibilities could be agreed upon in which China secures WMD facilities located within a specific distance of its border. The U.S., ROK and China could agree in a crisis to inform each other of military activities, tactical movements, and agree on operational rules.⁷⁹ Advance planning and coordination to de-conflict U.S. and Chinese forces and, if possible, to work together in support of shared interests, should be considered.
- Pledge that U.S. troops will not be deployed north of the 38th parallel for a prolonged period. If North Korea collapses and the nation is unified under South Korea's control, the U.S. military, along with the ROK military, will play an indispensable role in stabilizing the

79. James Steinberg and Michael O'Hanlon, *Strategic Reassurance and Resolve: U.S.-China Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 128-129; Glaser and Billingsley, *Reordering Chinese Priorities on the Korean Peninsula*, p. 23.

country, providing humanitarian assistance, and locating and neutralizing weapons of mass destruction. But U.S. troops would not have to remain beyond the period of time that it is necessary to perform those missions.

- Provide guarantees that all nuclear weapons would be removed from the peninsula. Chinese fears that a united Korea could have nuclear weapons can be relatively easily assuaged. There is no good reason why any nuclear weapons would need to remain in Korea after unification.
- Provide assurances that after unification the U.S.-ROK alliance would not be used to harm Chinese security interests. Whether the alliance is maintained in its current form or modified is up to Seoul and Washington, but both countries could agree that unless China is posing a security threat to the peninsula, U.S. bases in Korea would not be used as staging grounds for conducting military operations against China.

Conclusion

Although China officially supports unification of the Korean Peninsula, it essentially maintains a two Koreas policy. Beijing sustains this approach because even as the burdens and dangers of the status quo on the peninsula increase, it judges that the risks of unification are potentially greater. Nevertheless, China's growing economic and political clout along with the strengthening of its ties with South Korea are boosting Beijing's confidence that it can protect Chinese interests regardless of developments on the peninsula. The more permissible environment in recent years regarding discussion of Chinese policy toward the Koreas has engendered a robust debate among Chinese researchers about the potential costs and benefits for China of Korean unification.

Interviews with Chinese experts suggests that there is emerging support for actively shaping the development of events on the peninsula to facilitate a peaceful and independent unification. While these discussions among experts have likely not yet led to a reconsideration of Chinese policy, they suggest that Beijing's approach might change in the future if conditions are favorable. If Seoul is serious about

advancing its goal of Korean unification, it should, jointly with the U.S., consider ways to influence Chinese policy, including specific measures to affect China's cost/benefit calculus. A variety of steps aimed at easing Chinese fears and reducing the uncertainties associated with unification could be considered. Even though China does not favor a North Korean collapse, in the event that this occurs, the U.S., ROK, and China should be prepared for the challenges and opportunities posed by various contingencies.

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First Mover Responses to North Korean Instability: The Intervention-Legitimacy Paradox

Scott Snyder and Darcie Draudt

North Korea's immediate neighbors, particularly China, perceive a first-mover disadvantage in responding to North Korean instability. This paper seeks to project the path-dependent strategic considerations factoring into intervention in North Korean instability. Making specific reference to the political context and capacity for response on the part of China, the authors evaluate the benefits and costs to a first-mover in five scenarios of instability, including complex humanitarian emergency and collapse of state control, North Korea's lashing out, infighting and protracted struggle, infighting followed by humanitarian crisis, and North Korean nuclear proliferation. The paper concludes with an analysis of the geopolitical context in 2015 and China's evolving strategic interests for the Korean Peninsula.

Keywords: intervention-legitimacy paradox, North Korean instability, Sino-North Korean relations, U.S.-North Korean relations, first-mover disadvantage

Introduction

Kim Jong-un's brutal leadership consolidation efforts and further retreat from even its most enduringly supportive neighbors have casted doubt on the sustainability of the regime and have raised expectations that North Korea may face internal conflict, volatility, or even instability that could affect the viability of the regime. Under Xi Jinping, China has shown a veiled displeasure verging on censure of the young leader. Likewise, Park Geun-hye's Trustpolitik policy has failed to yield sustained inter-Korean dialogue or cooperation. In the event of instability or a political vacuum in North Korea, both China and

South Korea would face a dilemma, which we term the intervention-legitimacy paradox. Namely, the first external actor to intervene in response to instability in North Korea may gain material opportunities to shape events on the ground, but at possible cost to international perceptions of the legitimacy of intervention. The perceived disadvantages incurred by the first actor to intervene or instigate change on the Korean Peninsula will probably reduce the likelihood of a major discontinuity leading to the end of North Korea as a state unless the changes are large, internal in origin, and violent.

This paper seeks to describe the first-mover disadvantage that North Korea's immediate neighbors, and particularly China, will face in responding to North Korean instability. First, the authors describe the factors involved in influencing likely responses by neighboring countries to a North Korean contingency and the political context and capacity for response on the part of China. Next, we trace four likely scenarios of North Korean instability and potential reaction on the part of China. Finally, we conclude with an analysis of the current China-North Korea relationship and Chinese interests on the Korean Peninsula to explain China's perceived constraints on intervening in the North Korean regime.

First-Mover Problem in Regime Change

The further one delves into the specifics of how responses to North Korean instability might unfold, the more clear it becomes that the range of outcomes deriving from such instability is *path dependent*, and will be influenced by a combination of factors, including developments inside North Korea (including the form and extent of North Korean instability or state failure that might possibly lead to Korean unification), the responses of North Korea's neighbors to any internal instability, and the interaction of the neighbors' responses and internal developments inside North Korea. The path-dependent nature of circumstances surrounding North Korean instability means it is necessary to consider a wide range of plausible scenarios. The path toward

a new end state on the Korean Peninsula, including possibilities for unification or perpetuation of Korea's division under two separate states, will be directed by the duration and nature of instability, its causes, and its external effects on North Korea's neighbors, as well as by the prioritization and sequencing of initial responses by both state and non-state actors. Put more explicitly, the consequences of instability in North Korea will be affected by not only South Korea's resources and capacities but also by the timing of contributions and interventions from its partners in the region, namely China and the United States. The point at which each of these state actors become involved is of central importance, and the perceived first-mover disadvantage, wherein the first actor incurs higher costs of "owning" potentially protracted instability in North Korea, has resulted in upholding a status quo of superficial "stability" that may prove to be more deleterious in the long term for all.

Current literature on intervention in cases of failing or failed states tend to be prescriptive, focusing on constructing models for intervention and post-conflict stabilization. Many studies have advocated limited intervention, focus on restoration of state security in order to mitigate multiple potential dangers, including serving as sites for illicit trade and trafficking, tendency toward organized violence, or asylums for terrorist actors and organizations.¹ Other researchers have emphasized the importance of human security and internal safety mechanisms, providing humanitarian assistance recommendations based on the responsibility to protect.² While the debate over whether the North Korean state has already failed continues, the opaque nature of North Korea's leadership and governance capabilities makes discussions of North Korean instability crucial to planning the peninsula's future. The question of who moves first in response to North

1. For example, see Marina Ottaway and Stefan Mair, "States at Risk and Failed States: Putting Security First," Democracy and Rule of Law Project, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, September 2004.

2. See Gareth Evans, "From Humanitarian Intervention to the Responsibility to Protect," *Wisconsin International Law Journal* 24, no. 3 (2006), pp. 702-722.

Korean instability, and how that move will be perceived by the other side and by the international community, will depend in part on the specific circumstances existing in North Korea and the extent to which North Korea's spillover effects have a direct impact on its neighbors.

China has a geostrategic interest in maintaining the status quo of a divided Korean Peninsula and perceives risks in instigating any change in Pyongyang. (Indeed, Beijing is not the only neighbor restrained in its actions and reactions to North Korea; U.S.-ROK alliance policy is mired in defensive exercises designed to prevent conflict and perpetuate the status quo. At the same time, North Korea continues to seek asymmetric advantage through its ongoing nuclear weapons and ballistic missile development.³) But Beijing's estimation of these possible effects has influenced its calculus in intervening or applying too strong a hand to rein in Pyongyang, and it is possible to trace Beijing's reticence to move first in the event of North Korean instability. Beijing's views and prioritization of stability on the Korean Peninsula will influence the process and outcome of the international response to North Korean instability and will influence the consequences resulting from instability. In other words, the factor that may prove decisive in determining the prospects for and shape of a new status quo, or even the possibility of Korean unification, may be who moves first in response to North Korean instability and how others respond to that first move, rather than simply the response to developments in North Korea themselves.

Factors Shaping Neighboring Country Responses to North Korean Instability

Among many circumstances that would influence the consequences of North Korean instability, two factors that are likely have a bearing

3. Van Jackson, "The Korean Peninsula's Status Quo Crisis," *The Diplomat*, May 6, 2015.

on the amount, timing, and origin of resources available as part of the international response are: (1) the timing and pace of the process (more specifically, whether a contingency is gradual or sudden), and (2) the nature of instability in North Korea (such as, whether it results from the North Korean leadership's aggressive actions or it occurs as a result of the failure of the state and loss of political control over the population). These factors will be influenced both by the capacity of the North Korean leadership to address conditions on the ground and the responses of North Korea's neighbors. The responses are, in other words, based on developments within North Korea and the interplay of reactions at the state-level in the region.

North Korean Leadership

Despite the range of possible scenarios and diverse variables, the actor with the most bearing on the process and outcome deriving from North Korean instability would undoubtedly be the North Korean leadership. The critical question is whether the existing North Korean regime or any other internal North Korean contender for power could sufficiently manage change in the face of multiple internal and external challenges to its control. While the North Korean leadership would have limited control over the timing or pace of instability, its actions would have a major bearing on whether instability results primarily from internal factors or external aggression. Internally-driven instability might occur due to institutional weakness and loss of political control that could result in economic and humanitarian crises, while externally-driven instability might occur as a result of North Korean leadership efforts to regain or compensate for loss of control. In either case, it is possible to imagine both rapid and gradual or prolonged declines that would expose the incapacity of the North Korean leadership and lead to deepening crisis and/or instability in North Korea.

A failure of the North Korean leadership might result in chaos that would invite outside intervention to restore order, or it might lead to protracted internal struggle among competitors who assert

control over competing bureaucratic and institutional bases but are unable to consolidate political control. Problems resulting from weakened institutional capacity and obvious state failure in North Korea might include the market-based forms of association and cooperation outside the control of the state. This form of instability will draw a reactive response from North Korea's neighbors, but most likely would fall short of direct intervention as the moment of crisis is not easily apparent, due to difficulties in gathering sufficient intelligence to make an informed decision on whether and how to most effectively respond.

Another possible challenge resulting from loss of political control might include humanitarian challenges that would result in renewed large-scale refugee flows or displacement across national borders. A humanitarian crisis would presumably lend itself to a cooperative response, and in theory should represent an opportunity for active coordination between the United States, China, South Korea, and North Korea's other neighbors and international agencies in an effort to respond effectively to North Korean needs. However, as demonstrated by the Great Famine experience in the mid-1990s and the type of international response, indicators of crisis severity are often opaque and external intervention would likely be limited and restrained to humanitarian-focused efforts to restore conditions of stability.

In addition to institutional incapacity, a second type of trigger for conflict might involve efforts on the part of North Korea's leadership to reestablish or consolidate political control over various internal actors, including the use of externally-focused provocations used to strengthen internal political control. This type of trigger has a high potential for violence (both as a tool for change and as a reaction), and is more likely to play on existing geostrategic divisions among North Korea's neighbors, especially between the United States, South Korea, and Japan on the one hand and China, North Korea, and Russia on the other. A complete breakdown in political control or the emergence of overt rivalry among or within institutions in North Korea could result in a civil conflict, with the possibility that competing factions might appeal to different external actors for material support.

This scenario has the potential to draw larger powers into a proxy competition for influence over North Korea, and poses the greatest danger of broadening into a regional conflict. The biggest challenge is whether competing factions could garner sufficient support from an outside partner (such as China, Russia, or the United States) might be able constitute a viable alternative to the current regime. This is unlikely under present conditions, as evidenced by Kim Jong-un's purges, fear of defection within high-level cadres is high, and the ability of the regime to restrict and quell any possible peripheral counters ensures his leadership and political control.

Neighbors' Leadership: Capacity and Coordination

External reactions to North Korean instability will differ depending on whether it results from an internal loss of ability to govern (i.e., an "implosion") or from a lashing out by North Korea in an attempt to draw attention or reinforce domestic unity by engaging in an external provocation (i.e., an "explosion"). The nature of the process by which North Korean instability unfolds will also influence the character of the international response, including the level of resources and scale of response. China, the United States, and other neighbors of North Korea are likely to bring to bear as part of this process. In addition to the timing, pace, and nature of North Korean instability, three additional factors are relevant in considering the international response to instability in North Korea depending on how it unfolds: capacity, coordination, and political context. It is important to consider the likely responses of neighbors to prospective North Korean instability.

Republic of Korea

In most cases, South Korea will be on the frontline to determine what resources are needed. South Korea will also need to gauge whether the government and private sector have a capacity to meet the needs alone or, more likely whether and how to issue international appeals for goods that serve to meet the particular needs arising from North

Korean instability. South Korea's ability to coordinate both internally and with its ally, the United States, and other neighbors will have an influence on how the international humanitarian and political dimensions of the problem are defined.

South Korean studies of North Korean instability response scenarios emphasize the necessity of a whole-of-government response. Alliance planners, meanwhile, have recognized that South Korea will need the United States to play a key role in supporting intervention in any scenario addressing the specific challenges associated with North Korean instability. As Evans Revere points out, the main factor affecting alliance intervention is neither U.S. interest nor South Korean need, but rather North Korea's leadership and potential for opposition.⁴ Here, a whole-of-alliance response will be necessary, and is likely to involve comprehensive coordination and inter-governmental cooperation including among agencies that have not yet had long records of cooperation with each other.

The United States

In the event of a rapidly unfolding situation involving either external or internal violence or conflict, a response would be more likely to involve U.S. military assets. Sudden instability and the intervention of U.S.-ROK joint forces would result in significant change on the peninsula. The U.S.-ROK joint response would seek to (1) restore order and stabilize the security situation in North Korea, and (2) provide the necessary security to launch and/or enable a response focused on humanitarian, development, and reconstruction missions.

Likewise, if North Korean instability is accompanied by lashing out or military violence, the United States, by nature of its alliance

4. Evans Revere, "Korean Reunification and U.S. Interests: Preparing for One Korea." Presentation at "Cooperating for Regional Stability in the Process of Korean Unification: Contingency Preparations with the ROK-U.S. as Anchor," the Third Korea Research Institute for Security-Brookings Joint Conference, January 20, 2015, Seoul, South Korea. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/presentations/2015/01/20-korean-reunification-revere>.

commitments, is likely to be drawn into a larger role as part of a military response to the situation. Such a situation is also the one in which U.S. response is most clearly possible according to international law and by virtue of U.S. alliance commitments. In the event of North Korea violating South Korean or U.S. sovereignty and causing loss of life or property through use of nuclear weapons, the U.S.-ROK alliance may decide to take military defense measures comprising a range of possible goals and targets based on a mutually chosen desired end-states.⁵

If instability in North Korea unfolds in a gradual fashion, accompanied by minimal spillover impact on its neighbors, or shows itself primarily through humanitarian or non-military dimensions, the primary thrust of a response may be more economic, political, and humanitarian. In such cases, the United States would be more likely to support South Korea's direct response while avoiding direct involvement in the process. However, a complex humanitarian emergency in North Korea would complicate the calculus, as a drawn-out emergency may lead to spillover effects into China, thereby making it more likely to induce an early Chinese response. It would be in the United States' interest to coordinate such response with China, perhaps even developing coordinated or joint assistance programs within North Korea.⁶ The size and scope of the U.S. role (and that of other actors including China) is likely to be influenced by the extent to which the character of the response requires military power or stabilization versus economic or humanitarian resources.

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5. Lee Sung-chool, "The ROK-U.S. Joint Political and Military Response to North Korean Armed Provocations," Report of the Korea Chair, Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 2011. http://csis.org/files/publication/111006_Lee_ROKUSJointResponse_web.pdf, pp. 12-14.
 6. Scott Snyder, "Instability in North Korea and Its Impact on U.S.-China Relations," In *Managing Instability on China's Periphery*. Paul B. Stares, project director. Center for Preventative Action at the Council on Foreign Relations, September 2011. http://www.cfr.org/thinktank/cpa/asia_security.html.

China

China has several rationales for possible intervention to prop up a regime that is descending toward instability. First, many Chinese analysts see North Korea as a strategic “buffer zone” between it and the U.S.-allied South Korea; North Korea serves as a communist bastion against the westward-sweeping wave of democracy as well as a physical barrier between PLA forces and U.S. military installations in South Korea.⁷ The desire to maintain a buffer zone is further compounded by possible refugee flows. China would be anxious about possible U.S. involvement stemming from the U.S.-ROK alliance.⁸ Additionally, China’s economic ties to North Korea have ensured its survival, and economic collapse would be detrimental to those interests. China provides an estimated 85 percent of North Korea’s imports and may receive 75 percent of North Korea’s exports — though Pyongyang may be very uncomfortable with this dependence, it also has few other options for international trade.⁹

China’s ability to exert influence on the outcome resulting from Korean instability, and on resulting regional political and security arrangements, is likely to grow over time. This is significant because it gives China an incentive to delay Korean unification to the extent possible by economically and politically propping up North Korea as long as possible. Put differently, China has few incentives to be the first mover if change is gradual, but could feel pressure to intervene to forestall impending and widespread instability. Existing strategic mistrust between China and both South Korea and the United States

7. Dick K. Nanto and Mark E. Manyin, “China-North Korea Relations,” Congressional Research Service, December 28, 2010. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41043.pdf>. See also Lim, 2004.

8. Bruce Bennett, *Preparing for the Possibility of a North Korean Collapse*, RAND Corporation, 2013. http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR331.html, pp. 87-91.

9. Nicholas Eberstadt and Alex Colbin, “Dependencia, North Korean Style,” Asan Institute for International Studies, *Issue Brief* no. 32, November 6, 2014. <http://en.asaninst.org/contents/dependencia-north-korea-style/>.

is a final complicating factor that may influence how various scenarios may unfold. In fact, the gap between Chinese and South Korean interests and potentially contradictory responses to North Korean instability is great enough that it is possible to imagine the two sides responding to each other as much as to developments in North Korea.

Scenarios for Instability

As a means by which to further the discussion above, we might consider China's impact on four general scenarios in order to test the first mover's ability to shape potential outcomes resulting from North Korean instability: (1) complex humanitarian emergency and the collapse of state control; (2) North Korea's lashing out; (3) infighting and protracted struggle for political control; (4) internal struggle followed by humanitarian crisis, and (5) North Korean proliferation.

Humanitarian Emergency

A complex humanitarian emergency could lead to the collapse of the political governing structure, resulting in refugee flows and a need to stabilize internal political order. Problems resulting from a weakening of institutional capacity leading to state failure might include economic and humanitarian challenges and would result in renewed refugee flows or displacement that might spill across national borders. This form of instability would draw a reactive response from North Korea's neighbors, but most likely would fall short of a level necessary to induce direct intervention, at least in its initial stages. A humanitarian crisis is an instability scenario that in theory could lend itself to a cooperative response, and should represent an opportunity for active coordination between the United States, China, and South Korea — and possibly other state, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental actors — in an effort to respond effectively to North Korean needs.

A complex humanitarian emergency has already served as grounds for international intervention in North Korea in the mid-1990s; the

characteristics of that crisis are illustrative because they reveal a slowly unfolding crisis that ultimately did not result in a failure of North Korean political control despite severe internal stresses within the North Korean system. But a humanitarian emergency could also serve as the evidence for a loss of political control inside North Korea and cast sufficient doubt on its ability to govern, in which case a humanitarian crisis could become the framework upon which the international community bases its initial response to North Korean instability. A rapidly unfolding humanitarian crisis in North Korea would be a potentially powerful catalyst for action, but would presumably confine the framework for consideration of intervention to a humanitarian focus rather than directly addressing (forced) regime change. Multilateral intervention would ideally be cooperative, either through stepped up efforts by nongovernmental organizations or possibly involving military logistical elements in support of an operation that would be confined to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) functions. At the same time, any HADR operation might also be used as a pretext for a more intensive intervention to achieve specific political objectives, and such an intervention would be bound to capture the attention of the international community. For this reason, the questions of who responds first, the nature and scope of the response (and particularly whether the intervention involves physical presence in North Korea), and the political response by other parties to humanitarian intervention will have a bearing on the way in which the crisis response unfolds.

A humanitarian crisis accompanied by a political vacuum of leadership in Pyongyang could also become a pretext for early intervention by either China or South Korea in order to stabilize the situation and gain advantage in shaping the end state of the peninsula to their advantage. In such an environment, political control may be uneven and variable depending on the quality and effectiveness of local- or provincial-level authorities to maintain order and procure goods for the local population. A breakdown in coordinated governance and variance in the strength of local officials could also complicate potential plans for intervention from the outside. In areas that

remain stable, foreign intervention could become a source of conflict between the domestic officials and foreign HADR efforts. In areas of instability, there can be conflict between the foreign aid groups who intervene. A complex humanitarian emergency could also become exacerbated by the failing regime's response, which might use externally-targeted aggression to coerce neighboring states to supply food — and therefore bolster the stability of the regime.

In the event of a complex humanitarian emergency accompanied by state failure, China might be motivated to move first, especially if North Korean refugee flows to China trigger an early response. There have been reports that China has planned for an intervention that involves setting up a perimeter inside North Korean territory as a way of stemming refugee flows into China.¹⁰ However, such a course seems risky for China because it would invite strong political condemnation both from two fronts: South Korea, due to its troubled history with occupation and which would be blocked by China for its national goal of unification, and the international community, which views Chinese territorial and maritime border disputes with increasing suspicion. So even though China might have a strong desire to intervene, the intervention-legitimacy paradox would factor into their strategy. It is more likely that Chinese intervention in response to a complex humanitarian emergency would involve enhanced economic measures and moving material inputs into North Korea to stanch the refugee flow, but would stop short of military intervention. The bar inhibiting direct Chinese intervention into North Korea might gradually be lowered in the event of protracted chaos, but would likely come at a cost to China's international reputation and feed fears of Chinese expansionism among its Asian neighbors. Chinese military intervention into the North would likely carry high political costs in South Korea, the region and the international community.

Likewise, if South Korea were to pursue an early military intervention in North Korea to restore order in response to a humanitarian

10. Darcie Draudt, "Outward Migrations Flows in the Event of Regime Collapse: An Interview With Dr. Go Myung-hyun," *Sino-NK*. October 22, 2013.

and political crisis, Chinese analysts have already signaled their view that such an initiative would be contrary to international law and a violation of North Korea's sovereignty as a nation state, regardless of the merits of South Korea's constitutional, political, and historical claim on the North. In this case, legitimacy for South Korean intervention may build over time as the need for intervention becomes vital for regional stability. Protracted instability in the North and a prolonged vacuum in political power might eventually work in South Korea's favor if the international community were to judge that South Korea's jurisdiction over the North might be the best option to restore stability to the peninsula. However, the situation might be reversed and China might enjoy the legitimacy to intervene if North Korean authorities, faced with an irreversible loss of power and seeking their own safety and uncertain regime survival, were to invite Chinese political and military intervention to maintain stability as a result of North Korean leaders' loss of political control.

As long as the quality of instability internal to North Korea is characterized by a vacuum in leadership rather than an internal political competition among factions, the bar for intervention into the North may be higher than commonly realized. The first mover in this scenario may seek an advantage by shaping the reality on the ground especially in a sudden or rapid intervention that also involves military elements. But, such intervention could generate severe costs by generating negative international judgments (legal or political) regarding the legitimacy of the intervention, unless it is clear that such intervention would have been necessary to prevent the breakout of a civil war within North Korea. A gradually evolving, protracted crisis might afford a more conducive environment for military intervention by China (as protector of North Korea's sovereignty) or South Korea (as legitimate claimant to the entire peninsular territory) if the international community were to conclude that such intervention is necessary to prevent a vacuum or civil war (i.e., scenario 3). As long as the spillover effects from North Korean stability are primarily humanitarian, in the form of refugee flows, and do not involve violence, outward attacks, or internal military conflict among factions in the

North, the first responder may gain a geographical advantage but may also lose political legitimacy of the intervention. Moreover, should North Korean instability remain primarily a humanitarian rather than a military security issue, international stalemate is more likely to ensue, especially in a United Nations context, with no unanimous course of action effectively influencing either the political or the humanitarian dimensions of state failure in North Korea.

Rising North Korean Provocations

North Korean internal instability could result in intentional initiation of military conflict. Such provocations could be part of a strategy designed to gain resources from external actors or a means by which to reconsolidate domestic political control. In this scenario, the leadership might seek to compensate for loss of control over the main institutions in North Korea (including the military, public security institutions, or the party), or to stamp out emergent challengers that dare to challenge the state. The leadership might expect externally-focused provocations to face retaliation — in essence, the flailing regime would generate an external threat against which to unify, justifying strengthened internal political controls. A North Korean violent response to its own instability would most likely be sudden and exploit the element of surprise. It is hard to imagine a gradual lashing out by North Korea (although one might argue that current series of limited and sporadic provocations by North Korean leadership on the defensive might be considered a slow lashing out). Essentially, in the event that the Kim family regime were to determine that loss of political control were inevitable, Kim Jong-un's response would most likely involve a military action. Such an offensive attack followed by implosion tracks with a scenario that has been the subject of decades of USFK and ROK Ministry of National Defense planning.

In this case, North Korea would be the first mover in response to its own instability, and the victim of a North Korean strike becomes the respondent on which all eyes will be fixed. In this sense, the regime undercuts its legitimacy through its destabilizing acts. If the

target of a strike by a failing North Korean leadership were Seoul, the U.S.-ROK operational plans in the event of North Korea's offensive military provocations are clear and the response would probably constitute the shortest possible route to Korean unification. Although China might harbor objections, this scenario offers little that China could do in the face of U.S.-ROK retaliation against the North. Chinese authorities have already indicated to the North that Chinese support would not be forthcoming in the event of North Korean-initiated aggression against the South.

A North Korean missile strike on the territory of Japan, however, might pose a particularly difficult policy challenge for the United States involving differing expectations for military intervention between South Korean and Japanese allies. On the one hand, Japan would expect the United States to retaliate decisively against the North based on U.S. security commitments to the defense of Japan; while South Korea might show concern that a U.S. counterstrike would result in escalation of conflict in ways that would inevitably have direct fallout for South Korea.

A complicated but relatively implausible scenario might involve China as the victim of a North Korean strike, in which case China would arguably have a right to respond and a degree of political space in which do so, but may not have a detailed plan for intervention in response to such an action by Pyongyang. The United States and South Korea would certainly seek to increase communication with China to develop a coordinated response to a truly rogue North Korea. Though China may be reticent to force regime change, an aggressive, adversarial, and failing regime equipped with nuclear weapons outweighs any interests in maintaining a buffer zone.

Infighting and Internal Struggle for Control

A complete breakdown in political control or the emergence of overt rivalry between or within institutions in North Korea could result in a civil conflict, with the possibility that competing factions might appeal to different external actors for material support. This scenario

has the potential to draw larger powers into a proxy competition for influence over North Korea, and poses the greatest danger of broadening into a regional conflict. It also raises the greatest risk of drawing first and second responders into a conflictual spiral in which North Korean proxy forces play out conflicting approaches and interests of China on the one hand and a U.S.-backed South Korea on the other.

Because of the current character of the North Korean regime and the absence of organized opposition, the contours for the competing centers for such civil conflict are difficult to predict at this stage. The onset of civil war or a full-scale overt competition for power in North Korea may be unlikely, given that like his father Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-un appears to have successfully eviscerated potential alternative centers of power. Despite some uncertainty over the ability of Kim Jong-un to continue Kim family political control following his father's death in December 2011,¹¹ the young leader has apparently consolidated his control through various personnel changes and purges (most notably the execution of his uncle Jang Sung-taek, who some had previously presumed to serve as the regent for Kim Jong-un).¹² If instability in the North is to be accompanied by internal strife or a civil conflict, the onset of instability and competition for power in North Korea is likely to be gradual, murky, and chaotic, as principal contenders struggle behind the scenes to capture resources and institutional alliances necessary to build power in the event of a total collapse and deligitimation of the existing power structure in North Korea.

As part of those efforts to consolidate resources necessary to contend for power, it is possible that contenders might seek economic resources from China or South Korea. How external parties respond to requests for assistance will draw them into support for local proxies,

11. Jonathan Pollack, "Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un: North Korea in Transition," at Brookings Institution website. December 19, 2011. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2011/12/19-north-korea-pollack>.

12. Ken E. Gause, "North Korean Leadership Dynamics and Decision-Making Under Kim Jong-un: A Second-Year Assessment," Center for Naval Analyses, March 2014. http://www.cna.org/sites/default/files/research/northkorean_leadership_secondyearassessment.pdf, pp. 4-5.

perhaps primarily as a rear-guard action to prevent a less favorable contender from gaining power in North Korea to the exclusion of one's own interest. Regardless of whether China or South Korea is a first mover in responding to such requests from potential aspirants for power within North Korea, it is likely that there will be two or more contenders. Once any proxy, whether backed by China or South Korea, becomes apparent, other contenders within North Korea will a rush to secure alternative sources of financial support.

A proxy competition for political control as a result of decisions by South Korea and China to provide material support, risks prolonged internal competition for power and may in fact heighten instability, to the cost and detriment of both Chinese and South Korean interests. Moreover, international organizations such as the United Nations would be marginalized; disputing parties, based on various claims of legitimacy to rule, would initially prevent international intervention, and the UN may not be able to help mediate or host negotiations until the political factions have carried out their plans, at which point a stronger leader may be clear.

Following a system breakdown in North Korea, the emergence of a North Korean civil conflict that draws competition among competing proxies externally financed by neighbors with conflicting interests is the worst possible scenario one can imagine developing from North Korean instability. Such a scenario might involve protracted destabilization of the North and would increase the bill for reconstruction of the North, which at least one source estimates at around USD 500 billion.¹³

Internal Struggle Followed By Humanitarian Crisis

A fourth possible scenario would be a combination of scenarios one and three described above. In the event of internal competition for power, competing factions might turn to outside actors for assistance. In the wake of the dissolution of political control, sources for food

13. Agence France-Presse, "South Korea Says Economic Cost of Unification Would Be \$500 Billion," *The Guardian (London)*, November 19, 2014.

and other supplies to the wider population may break down, leading to a humanitarian crisis. Were governments to respond to these appeals with financial aid or supplies to one of competing factions (but not to the point of full-scale military intervention by providing troops), each state may later find themselves in a constrained position in the event a later humanitarian crisis arising around the civil strife.

This scenario, to an extent, is reflective of the situation in North Korea in the period following the Korean War in the 1950s and 1960s. In this case, post-war North Korea under a politically weakened Kim Il-sung faced a competition between two different patrons, the Soviet Union and China, for influence in the post-war reconstruction of North Korea. Seeing its interests best served by a strong socialist brother as an anchor on the peninsula against the incoming U.S. export of democracy below the 38th parallel, Beijing's debt cancellation, aid, factory reconstruction, and technical training supported North Korea's economic stabilization.¹⁴ In the end, Kim Il-sung consolidated power by purging pro-Chinese and pro-Soviet factions who challenged his leadership. (U.S. and UN aid to South Korea performed a similar role, supporting allies in the Asia-Pacific first with defense and then with development support.)

In the current geostrategic climate, the emergence of competing factions within North Korea may play out differently. If neighboring states choose to involve themselves in support for a particular contending faction or power center within North Korea, they might find themselves constrained due to the intervention-legitimacy paradox in response to the outbreak of a subsequent humanitarian crisis. South Korean groups, including not only the state but also civil and political groups, might seek early involvement with one of the rival North Korean factions, possibly as a way to ensure or instigate unification with the South. On the other hand, Washington's main concern

14. Charles K. Armstrong, "The Deconstruction and Reconstruction of North Korea, 1950-1960," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 8, issue 51, no. 2 (2010). http://www.japanfocus.org/-Charles_K_-Armstrong/3460/article.html.

would be commitment to unification and containing any violence to North Korean territory, and division over how to respond could become a source of tension and difference between the United States and South Korea. It would be both unlikely and impolitic for the United States to directly and unilaterally provide aid in the form of arms; indeed, most U.S. policy experts recommend the Washington defer to Seoul on management of change or contest in North Korea.¹⁵ The United States might seek influence, however, by providing resources to South Korea for its activities to support a faction within a destabilized South Korea. In this case, the United States and international organizations such as the UN would have the political space to provide humanitarian assistance to a crisis that develops from infighting. Both the United States and South Korea have sought a deeper level of consultation with China on the need to collaborate in planning for such a scenario, but Beijing has resisted such discussions.¹⁶

China might also have an immediate interest in supporting a pro-Beijing faction and in ensuring the continuity of the North Korean state. China's early intervention might also generate expectations that responsibility to offer solutions for a humanitarian crisis would fall on Beijing's shoulders. Failure to do so would corrode the political strength of the faction it supports, both to a North Korean domestic and to an international audience. Without taking steps to mitigate unrest and migration likely to follow such a humanitarian crisis during a battle for political control, China would face the sort of massive refugee flows it seeks to avoid. As such, in the event of a China-first intervention, China would seek to fortify the Sino-Korean land border in addition to providing food supply.¹⁷ China would be unlikely to

15. For example, see Paul B. Stares and Joel S. Wit, "Preparing for Sudden Change in North Korea," *Council Special Report*, no. 42 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, January 2009), pp. 29-30.

16. Bruce Bennett and Jennifer Lind, "The Collapse of North Korea: Military Missions and Requirements," *International Security* 36, no. 6 (2011), p. 87.

17. Bonnie Glaser, Scott Snyder, and John S. Park, "Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor: Chinese Views of Economic Reform and Stability in North Korea," Working Paper (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies and U.S. Institute for Peace, January 3, 2008), p. 19.

tolerate mass migration into its borders, especially if it is able to influence actors competing for North Korean leadership from within.

South Korea might also seek to preemptively stem potential refugee flows, but such a maneuver might also endanger Seoul's influence in the North following stabilization of a new regime. If China is the first mover in trying to influence the course of events in North Korea, South Korea's options to provide aid to a humanitarian crisis could be shaped by the nature of the China faction — how much it is framed as distant or near to Seoul, and whether it is revolutionary or reactionary within the North Korean context. A China-backed North Korea group might find South Korea a threat, and seek to limit influence from the South. But, if no competing faction were backed by South Korea and a consolidated China-backed North Korean leadership were inclined toward reform, Seoul may have room to send economic support, food aid, or human resources to the North to help address the humanitarian crisis. Were this the case, a North Korea with a China-backed leadership could potentially be secured by China, but have its resources and infrastructure rebuilt by South Korea.

North Korea Proliferation

A fifth scenario that would be a trigger for instability might involve North Korean proliferation associated with a successful terrorist attack involving the use of nuclear materials from North Korea or evidence of the transfer of knowledge that enables emerging actors to become nuclear-capable. In this case, it is highly likely that the United States might resort to the use of force against North Korea both to punish the North and to decapitate the North Korean leadership so as to eliminate the possibility of the North engaging in further proliferation-related activities. The United States would claim that international proliferation laws and norms corroborate its legitimacy in intervening, thereby lessening the effect of the intervention-legitimacy paradox.

The United States has offered numerous pledges and assurances to North Korea that it does not have hostile intent toward the North

during negotiations and seeks to address its denuclearization via “negotiated solutions,” but the United States has also been clear in its commitment to extended deterrence of the North. The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review provides blanket nuclear security assurances to non-nuclear states, which presumably apply universal to every country except North Korea as a *de facto* nuclear state and possibly to Iran.¹⁸ However, in the event that an act of nuclear terrorism were to occur as a result of North Korean proliferation, the United States would likely take its revenge militarily by destabilizing the North Korean regime using military means.

Presumably, such a scenario would be a prelude to rapid Korean unification and would obligate the United States to remain involved in ways that restore stability and reconstruction of the North. It is easy to imagine that despite objections both to U.S. military intervention and to Korean unification, there would be little that China might be able to do to oppose it. In fact, nuclearization and proliferation may be a tipping point for China to consider North Korea as a strategic burden rather than a buffer zone.¹⁹ At the same time, the conduct of such an operation against China’s border state and erstwhile buffer would also have a potentially profound effect on U.S.-China relations, as well as on China’s views of the United States. The question is whether the two great powers can work cooperatively to support and, with Seoul, manage a unification by absorption process.²⁰ How China responds to and manages such a process would more clearly define the contours of its rise as a global power.

This scenario runs the risk of taking the circumstances surrounding Korean unification out of the hands of the Koreans themselves,

18. “Nuclear Posture Review Report,” U.S. Department of Defense, April 2010. <http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010%20Nuclear%20Posture%20Review%20Report.pdf>.

19. Kim Heungkyu, “From a Buffer Zone to a Strategic Burden: Evolving Sino-North Korea Relations During the Hu Jintao Era,” *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 22, no. 1 (2010), pp. 57-74.

20. See also Snyder, “Instability in North Korea and Its Impact on U.S.-China Relations.”

even while resulting in the outcome to which they are rhetorically committed. Such a development would have profound influence on the U.S.-Korea alliance, and would likely be a test of the survival of the alliance.

Conclusion: China's Strategic Interests and the 2015 Geopolitical Context

To South Korea, the division of the Korean Peninsula and the existence of the North Korean regime is an obstacle to unification and a source of instability. President Park Geun-hye's Presidential Committee for Unification Preparation, announced in February 2014 and first convened in August 2014, has sought to develop a comprehensive approach to planning for unification.²¹ The committee comprises fifty members with President Park as the committee chair; members come from the civil sector and government, and its subcommittees address issues of foreign policy and security, economics, social and cultural aspects, and politics and law.²² The committee, which has announced it would complete its plan in two to three years,²³ has followed an approach framed by unification by absorption, a method which even within the committee has been contentious.²⁴

Meanwhile, under the Park administration South Korea has courted China, its largest trading partner and who it sees as holding the key to Pyongyang (and by extension, unification). While North Korea has been seen attempting to diversify its own foreign relations, South Korea has secured a public reaffirmation by China of its commitment

21. Chang Jae-soon, "Park to Launch Unification Preparatory Committee," *Yonhap*, February 25, 2014.

22. Presidential Committee for Unification Preparation website. <http://www.pcup.go.kr/main.do>. (Date Accessed June 12, 2015).

23. "Presidential Committee for Unification Preparation Announces Plan Will Be Completed in 2-3 Years" (in Korean), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, March 3, 2015.

24. Kim Sung-jae, "Unification by Absorbtion Will Be Disastrous" (in Korean), *JoongAng Ilbo*, March 18, 2015.

to denuclearization.²⁵ Hwang Joon-gook, South Korea's chief delegate of the six-party talks and the director of MOFA's Korean Peninsula Peace Negotiation Center, highlighted "China's special responsibility" and "the constructive role that only China can play" before he visited China to meet his Chinese counterpart Wu Dawei, but China responded by stating that efforts to contain North Korea's threat are a "mutual responsibility" and "constructive effort." A South Korean news article on the exchange concludes that China has denied appeals to enhance their pressure on the North.²⁶

The United States, for its part, has made it clear that North Korea's continued development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles destabilizes the region and threatens the security of neighboring countries. Moreover, U.S. officials have reiterated the commitment to a peninsula reunified under Seoul's leadership. In Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel's words, "We will never accept a permanent division of the Korean Peninsula," underscoring first efforts to sustain peace "through deterrence and a strong allied defense" and maintenance of regional stability as preparation for unification.²⁷ Like South Korea, the United States identifies China as important in North Korea's denuclearization. In May 2015, Secretary of State John Kerry, speaking in Seoul at a press conference with South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs Yun Byung-se, said, "With respect to the methodology for boosting sanctions and other things, we (the United States and China) are discussing all of that now. China has obviously an extraordinary leverage."²⁸

25. Scott Snyder and Byun See-won, "China-Korea Relations: Balancing Acts by China and South Korea," *Comparative Connections*, September 2014. http://csis.org/files/publication/1402qchina_korea.pdf.

26. "China Steps Back Again [From its Special Responsibility With North Korea] ... Are They Committed to Solving the Problem?" (in Korean) *Munhwa Ilbo*, May 29, 2015.

27. Daniel R. Russel, Remarks at CSIS Korean Unification Conference, Washington, DC. December 10, 2014. <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2014/12/234944.htm>.

28. David Brunnstrom and Park Ju-min, "Kerry Says U.S. and China Discuss Further Sanctions On North Korea," Reuters, May 18, 2015.

China has placed denuclearization and stability on the same footing with respect to its priorities for the Korean Peninsula. Some analysts indicate Beijing's attitude toward Pyongyang may be getting colder, based on China's criticism of North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear capabilities, Pyongyang's turn away from Beijing to seek other potential partners, and Kim Jong-un's execution of officials deeply engaged with Chinese economy and politics, such as Jang Sung-taek.²⁹

In spring 2015, Beijing began to show signs of impatience and concern over North Korea's potential to threaten the stability of the region. Chinese nuclear experts in April this year reportedly estimated North Korea's arsenal of nuclear warheads to be up to twenty (similar to U.S. estimates). Reading between these lines, nuclear arms expert Gary Samore explained that the release of these estimates must have been encouraged by the Chinese government. Samore believes this is a way for China to express to the United States its frustration with the stagnated talks on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, Samore believes this is a "sign of some nervousness on the part of China that Kim Jong-un may do something provocative that would hurt China's national interest."³⁰

U.S. officials claim that China has agreed that pressure needs to be part of the multilateral approach to containing Pyongyang.³¹ But a May 2015 statement by Chinese MOFA spokesperson Hong Lei calls once again for resumption of the six-party talks, which Hong says would "secure a big picture called the Korean Peninsula's peace and stability."³² (Complicating China's calculus is U.S.-ROK informal

29. Michael Pilger and Caitlin Campbell, "Diminishing China-North Korea Exchanges: An Assessment," U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Staff Research Report, March 23, 2015. <http://www.uscc.gov/Research/diminishing-china-north-korea-exchanges-assessment>, p. 3.

30. "Expert: China's Nuclear Warning May Be Sign of Frustration With U.S.," *Voice of America*, April 27, 2015.

31. "China Agrees To 'Pressure' N. Korea On Nuclear Tests, U.S. Says," *Newsmax*, May 29, 2015.

32. "China Says 'Don't Provoke' On North Korea's Assertion On Nuclear Warhead Miniaturization" (in Korean), *Maeil Business Newspaper*, May 21, 2015.

discussions of introducing the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) weapons system, a U.S. technology that might be introduced as a deterrent to the growing North Korean missile threat.³³ Moreover, China has tried its best to play down fears of North Korea's threat: a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) test by North Korea on May 9 set off speculation regarding its impact on diplomacy with China,³⁴ but Chinese MOFA spokesperson Hua Chunying urged the international community to "react with restraint,"³⁵ a Chinese call to perpetuate the status quo.

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33. Scott Snyder, "South Korea's Self-Defense Needs: Does China Get a Veto?" *Asia Unbound*, CFR.org, February 13, 2015. <http://blogs.cfr.org/asia/2015/02/13/south-koreas-self-defense-needs-does-china-get-a-veto/>.

34. Victor Cha, "North Korean SLBM Launch."

35. "Beijing Calls for Restrained Reaction to North Korea's Ballistic Missile Launch," TASS, May 11, 2015.

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Unification Options and Scenarios: Assisting A Resistance

David S. Maxwell

Unification of Korea is the only acceptable outcome on the Korean Peninsula. It is the only condition that will solve three of the most intractable problems in Northeast Asia: (1) the Kim family regime's nuclear threat; (2) the human rights atrocities and crimes against humanity that have been perpetrated on the Korean people living in the north each and every day for the past six decades; and (3) the achievement peace and prosperity in the region. It is only through unification described as "a stable, secure, peaceful, economically vibrant, non-nuclear peninsula, reunified under a liberal constitutional form of government determined by the Korean people," that can bring security and stability to Northeast Asia.

There are four paths to unification: peaceful, internal regime change, regime collapse, and war. Because no one can foresee the path it will take, planning for unification has been stymied. Peaceful unification is the best but also counterintuitively the hardest to achieve. Regime collapse (that could lead to conflict) and war will result in the significant loss of blood and treasure and have global economic impact as a minimum. Further, it is possible that due to North Korean indoctrination that the Korean people living in the north may resist unification and form a resistance to conduct an insurgency against the ROK as it implements unification plans.

There is the possibility of growing internal resistance against the Kim family regime. Considering the possibility of resistance after the removal of the regime, one way to prevent it may be to co-opt the internal resistance now, give it support and whether it is successful or not, this could help prevent organized resistance to unification. It is time to take a professional approach to supporting a resistance in the north.

Keywords: Unification, Kim family regime, Dresden Initiative, resistance, unconventional warfare

"It is time to take a professional approach to supporting a resistance among the Korean people living in the north."

Unification of Korea is the only outcome that will solve three of the most intractable problems in Northeast Asia: (1) the Kim family regime's nuclear threat; (2) the human rights atrocities and crimes against humanity that have been perpetrated on the Korean people living in the north¹ each and every day for the past six decades; and (3) the threat to peace and prosperity in the region. It is only through unification, described as *"a stable, secure, peaceful, economically vibrant, non-nuclear peninsula, reunified under a liberal constitutional form of government determined by the Korean people,"*² that can bring security and stability to Northeast Asia. No enlightened person can deny that this is what all Korean people deserve.

The combination of threats posed by North Korea with its conventional and asymmetric military capabilities, and the impact of conflict on the region and globally as well as the thought of the humanitarian crisis with 25 million hungry and suffering Korean people, has paralyzed the nations that have a major role in the region (the Republic of Korea, the United States, Japan, China, and Russia) as well as the broader international community. For decades we have approached the security and humanitarian problems through stovepipes trying to solve pieces and parts of the overall problem. There are the six-party talks trying to solve the nuclear problem, while the regime continues to develop and test nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems, while rewriting its constitution to call itself a nuclear state. For the first time, there is the United Nations Commission of Inquiry (COI) investigation of the human rights atrocities that called for the referral of Kim Jong-un to the International Criminal Court. There are

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1. The use of the phrase "Korean people living in the north" is deliberate. It is used to recognize that there are no north or South Korean people but only Koreans out of respect for the ROK Constitution and the unnatural division of the peninsula.
 2. David S. Maxwell, "A Strategy for the Korean Peninsula Beyond the Nuclear Crisis," *Military Review* 84, no. 5 (2004), p. 104.

many other initiatives of engagement with governments and non-government organizations to assist the north with education, technology development, and agricultural development as well as food aid trying to assist the Korean people living in the north.

It is time to recognize the central problem and to understand that nuclear weapons and human suffering are the result of one thing: the existence of the Kim family regime and its oppression and enslavement of the Korean people living in the north. With recognition of the problem, it may be possible to harness or at least orchestrate the actions of the many disparate organizations to achieve one goal: to free the people in the north and reunite the entire Korean Peninsula.

Of course to many, this is interpreted as regime change and in effect that is what I am arguing except that I am not arguing for an externally imposed regime change but one organized, led, and executed by people from within the northern part of Korea so that they can be free to peacefully reunite with their Korean brothers and sisters in the southern half of the peninsula.

What stymies the international community and regional powers from achieving decisive change in the Kim family regime behavior and solving the nuclear and human rights issues is first and foremost the existence of the regime and its vital national interest: regime survival. The regime will not succumb to international engagement or pressure or carrots or sticks. It will only continue to practice its time worn strategy of conducting blackmail diplomacy by using provocations to gain political and economic concessions while conducting illicit activities (counterfeiting, drug trafficking, and weapons proliferation to rogue states and non-state actors) around the world to gain hard currency and vital resources to ensure survival of the regime. There is no carrot or stick that will cause the regime to end its quest for nuclear weapons or lift the yoke of oppression from the people in the north because both are deemed as key to regime survival.

The second obstacle that prevents action is the uncertainty of regime collapse that could very likely lead to conflict or the outbreak of war between North and South on the Peninsula. The only thing we know with some certainty is that any form of conflict from regime

collapse or war will lead to a tremendous loss of blood and treasure on the peninsula and the economic effects of conflict will have global impact.

Some will argue that supporting a resistance in North Korea poses a moral hazard as it could put innocent Koreans at risk if the Kim family regime conducts widespread security operations to suppress a resistance. I would argue that the regime is already conducting such operations because the system is designed in such a way as to deliberately oppress the people to prevent coups and resistance. Yes, there will be crackdowns and Koreans will be arrested and put into the gulags and worse. But I would counter the moral hazard argument with a reminder that the 25 million Koreans living in the north are already suffering horrendously with many being sent to the gulags and worse already. They deserve to be free and the risk posed by supporting a resistance is one worth taking for the people to attain freedom. We should consider the morality of not helping them and remember the history of not helping the suffering and oppressed which has in past times led to genocide in other parts of the world.

Nor should we be afraid to talk about this for fear of upsetting the Chinese or even undermining potential negotiations with North Korea. The Chinese and the Kim family regime, as well as others in the international community, believe this is the ROK, and with U.S. support, objective of President Park's Dresden Initiative.³ No amount of words, denials, or lack of words will alter their belief, so we may as well be transparent about our belief and desired end state: that there will be no end to the nuclear threat, no end to the human rights atrocities, or the establishment of security and stability in North Korea and Northeast Asia until there is unification. We should not shy away from these objectives or the way to achieve them.

Why should we focus on internal resistance among the Korean people living in the north? From all outward appearances, it seems

3. "Full Text of Park's Speech on N. Korea," *The Korean Herald*, March 28, 2014 (also known as the Dresden Initiative), available at: <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20140328001400>.

that Kim Jong-un has a firm grip on the nation given the successfully brutal purges he continues to execute. In fact, a reading of Robert Collins' seminal work on the analysis of regime collapse shows that North Korea is in the suppression phase (phase four of the seven phases of regime collapse) and that it is phase five in which resistance overcomes the regime's ability to suppress. Once phase five is reached, there could be a quick succession through phase six, the fracture of the regime, and phase seven, the formation of a new government (and possibly the beginning of the path to unification).⁴

We are seeing some evidence of internal resistance from the nascent but growing black market economy as well as the newly authorized markets in support of the *byungjin* policy (dual efforts to develop nuclear weapons and the economy),⁵ to the increasing access to outside information and people taking risks to hear the news from non-North Korean sources and watch South Korean dramas. Although we have recently seen soldiers cross the DMZ to defect, there has been an overall decline in defectors due to the increased border security to prevent civilian defections. This may be an indication of the regime's assessment of the increasing resistance among the general population. We also see evidence where security forces, to include the military, are strong-arming the people not to enforce laws or protect the regime but to obtain resources, both money and food, for themselves. And while corruption has always been an integral part of the regime we are seeing it rise to even higher levels. We have seen evidence of possible mutiny dating back to 1996 and the 6th Corps. One of the most important indicators can be summarized by this assessment by Dr. Bruce Bechtol:

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4. Robert Kaplan, "When North Korea Fails," *Atlantic Magazine*, October 2006, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/10/when-north-korea-falls/305228/> Kaplan summarizes Robert Collins' Seven Phases of Collapse.
 5. Cheon Seong-Whun, "The Kim Jong-un Regime's 'Byungjin' (Parallel Development) Policy of Economy and Nuclear Weapons and the 'April 1st Nuclearization Law'," KINU Online Series CO13-11, Korea Institute for National Unification, April 23, 2013, [http://www.kinu.or.kr/upload/neoboard/DATA01/co13-11\(E\).pdf](http://www.kinu.or.kr/upload/neoboard/DATA01/co13-11(E).pdf).

"Anecdotal incidents like this (and worse) also occurred under Kim Jong-il — including a corps-wide mutiny in 6th corps.

The difference is that now — and this is key — much of the corruption, confusion, and fear now exists at the very highest levels. This is as a result of the misjudged overcompensation and purges conducted by Kim Jong-un. His father always had the loyalty of the army and knew how to pay off or coerce high ranking officials to get the loyalty of those that mattered — despite the problems with maintaining a 1.2 million man military in a country of 25 million people, with an economy in the toilet. Kim Jong-un still has no real power base in the military. This may — may — be what brings him down."⁶

Dr. Bechtol's powerful and important assessment should be a wake-up call to the possibility of regime collapse and all the attendant consequences for the alliance and should motivate us to consider the importance of internal resistance in North Korea and the implications of such resistance both before and after regime collapse or conflict and especially as it might influence Korean unification.

As I have previously written I believe there are four broad paths to unification (Figure 1).⁷

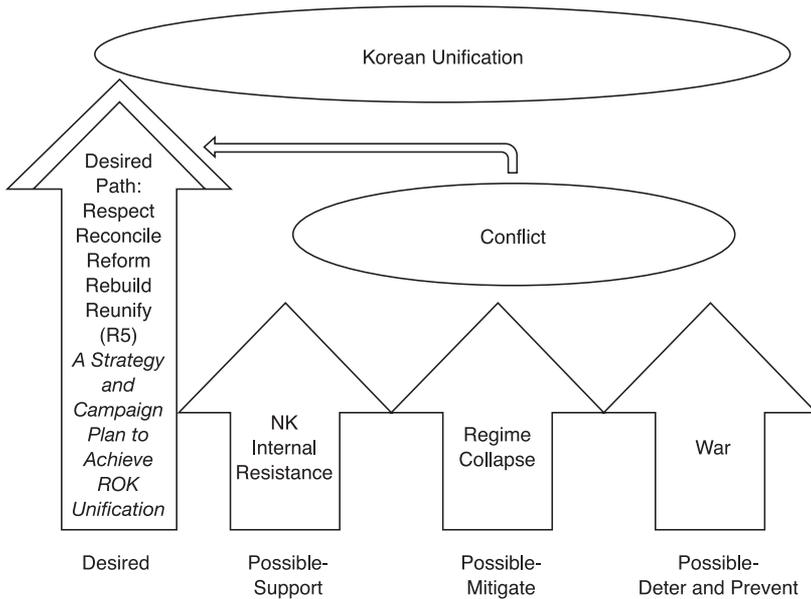
Certainly peaceful unification is the ideal and we would very much like it to follow the "5 R's" — respect, reconciliation, reform, rebuild, and reunify. However, as stated and as I think most recognize, Kim Jong-un is unlikely to follow such a path unless he was assured that the end result would be a Korean Peninsula dominated by the Kim family regime, something which the ROK government and 99 percent of the 48 million Koreans living in the South would never allow.

But the pursuit of peaceful unification is important though there has been relatively little planning for it. The first is that we are paralyzed by the thought that unification may only come through the catastrophic collapse of the Kim family regime or the re-initiation of

6. Email from Dr. Bruce Bechtol to the author, June 19, 2015.

7. David S. Maxwell, "Should The United States Support Korean Unification And If So, How?" *International Journal of Korean Studies* 18, no. 1 (2014), pp. 139-156.

Figure 1. Paths to Korean Unification.⁸



hostilities that will conclude the war that was suspended by the Armistice in 1953 (with a ROK victory this time). The second is that although it may seem counterintuitive, planning for peaceful unification is hard and complex and has been held back because of this complexity as well as the desire not to telegraph the desires of the ROK and the alliance.

Planning for peaceful unification is much harder than unification after war or collapse. It requires planning for the complete integration of the Koreans living in the north into a modern political, economic and cultural paradigm that has been virtually unknown by the people in the North and for which they have no experience. From a free market to free elections to integration and transition of existing bureaucracies as well as militaries to recovery and proper disposition of nuclear weapons (just to name a few) peaceful unification is going

8. Ibid.

to be very challenging and it is the realization of this complexity that has caused paralysis among many who should be planning for this and instead, we plan for deterrence and defense, defense against regime provocations and possible regime collapse. All of these contingencies prevent us from planning for the ultimate end state. What is missed, however, is that regardless of the path to unification, the basic requirements for integration and transition in a peaceful unification scenario will be required in various forms after war or collapse. This despite the fact that some view unification of Korea after war or collapse as easier because the North Korean political system, the military, and the infrastructure will be destroyed. The entire territory of the northern part of Korea will have to be rebuilt from the ground up.

This assumption that unification will be easier following war or collapse neglects the recognition that the Korean people living in the north, due to indoctrination, ignorance, fear, remnants of the North Korea regime and military, and various other reasons may in fact resist unification. Resistance by the Korean people living in the north is likely the most difficult condition that the ROK and the ROK-U.S. alliance will have to address.

I recently participated as a guest lecturer in a course at Fort Leavenworth called "The Special Operations Campaign Artistry Program" (SOCAP) which is based on the Army TRADOC G2's Red Team Leaders Course.⁹ A handful of students were asked to look at contingencies on the Korean Peninsula and after conducting a strategic analysis they understood that the long-term end state was unification of the Korean Peninsula.

They introduced me to a technique call pre-mortem analysis.

"Premortem analysis is a method for helping decision makers anticipate problems. The purpose of a Premortem is to find key vulnerabilities in a plan. In contrast to risk analysis, Premortem begins with the assumption that the plan has failed. The pull of groupthink, consensus, and a false sense of security is punctured, and is replaced by an active search

9. Red Team Leader Training, <http://usacac.army.mil/organizations/ufmcs-red-teaming>.

aimed at preventing trouble later on. The premise for the Premortem exercise is that people may feel too confident once they have arrived at the plan. Premortem analysis empowers the participants to question the premise of a proposed course of action, its assumptions, and tasks. It breaks ownership of a course through a divergent process that encourages objectivity and skepticism.”¹⁰

As they looked at the problem of Korean unification, they conducted the Premortem analysis and among other causes of failure and difficulty in achieving the end state (e.g., costs too high; China blocks unification, extended civil war and internal conflict), they determined that one of the biggest threats to unification could be internal resistance and insurgency waged by both remnants of the Kim family regime and the Korean people living in the north.

One of the reasons for such resistance might be because North Korea and the Kim family regime are a “guerrilla dynasty,” a phrase coined by author Adrian Buzo who gave that to his book on North Korea. He described the nation of the regime this way:

“In the course of this struggle against factional opponents, for the first time Kim began to emphasize nationalism as a means of rallying the population to the enormous sacrifices needed for post-war recovery. This was a nationalism that first took shape in the environment of the anti-Japanese guerrilla movement and developed into a creed through the destruction of both the non-Communist nationalist forces and much of the leftist intellectual tradition of the domestic Communists. Kim’s nationalism did not draw inspiration from Korean history, nor did it dwell on past cultural achievements, for the serious study of history and traditional culture soon effectively ceased in the DPRK [Democratic People’s Republic of Korea]. Rather, DPRK nationalism drew inspiration from the Spartan outlook of the former Manchurian guerrillas. It was a harsh nationalism that dwelt on past wrongs and promises of retribution for “national traitors” and their foreign backers.

10. *The Applied Critical Thinking Handbook* (Formerly the Red team Handbook), Version 7.0 January 2015, University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies, TRISA (TRADOC G2 Intelligence Support Activity), Ft Leavenworth, Kansas, pp. 167-169.

DPRK nationalism stressed the “purity” of all things Korean against the “contamination” of foreign ideas, and inculcated in the population a sense of fear and animosity toward the outside world. *Above all, DPRK nationalism stressed that the guerrilla ethos was not only the supreme, but also the only legitimate basis on which to reconstitute a reunified Korea.*¹¹ (emphasis added)

Because the Korean people living in the north have been indoctrinated with this “guerrilla ethos” remnants of the regime and the military, and as well as some of the population are likely to resist all outside intervention even from the ROK. We must not make the same erroneous assumption made in 2003 in Iraq: that the U.S. and coalition forces would be welcomed as liberators. In fact, although there was a positive welcome initially by many in Iraq, it is unlikely that there will be anything near that level in North Korea even after the collapse of the regime by whatever means. As I have written, I think resistance and insurgency in North Korea could make Iraq pale in comparison.¹²

At this point, we have two competing views of resistance in North Korea. On the one hand, we are seeing nascent resistance among the Korean people living in North Korea. The indications are small, e.g., the people are defying the regime in accessing outside information and using foreign currency, the decrease in defections may be a result of regime assessments that more people are trying to escape. There are cracks in the security apparatus as they become more concerned with gaining personal wealth than strictly enforcing the laws of the regime. On the other hand, we are concerned with the likelihood that there will be resistance to unification following war or

11. Adrian Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty: Politics and Leadership in North Korea* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1999), p. 1.

12. David S. Maxwell, “Irregular Warfare on the Korean Peninsula,” *Small Wars Journal*, November 30, 2010 <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jml/art/irregular-warfare-on-the-korean-peninsula>. Also in Chapter Six “Thoughts on Irregular Threats from north Korea - Post-Conflict and Post-Collapse: *Understanding Them to Counter Them*,” in *Confronting Security Challenges on the Korean Peninsula*, ed. Bruce Bechtol (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Foundation, 2011).

regime collapse because of the guerrilla ethos. As we consider the Premortem analysis that resistance and insurgency could prevent or at least significantly hinder unification, we must determine a way to mitigate if not prevent resistance in the north.

One possible way to prevent resistance to unification is to co-opt the nascent resistance to focus its efforts toward resisting the Kim family regime now and for the ROK-U.S. alliance to assist in development of the resistance. In short, the ROK and the U.S. should consider conducting unconventional warfare that is defined as “operations and activities that are conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.”¹³

If we recall the four paths to unification I postulated above; peaceful unification, internal regime change, regime collapse, and war we should consider that internal regime change resulting in a leadership willing to seek peaceful unification could be the optimal path to unification.

What we are really describing here is a fight for legitimacy among the Korean people living in the north to include second tier leaders who are not part of the Kim family regime core. Even if a resistance does not result in a regime change and there is catastrophic collapse or war the resistance that was developed and supported could play a key role in stabilizing the northern part of Korea during post-collapse or post-conflict. It could be instrumental in preventing an insurgency as well as in the transition to a unified Korea through assisting the integration of political, economic and security institutions.

There are five main objectives for a resistance force support by the ROK government and the ROK-U.S. alliance:

1. Undermine the legitimacy of the Kim family regime (KFR) in the eyes of the Korean people living in the north.

13. Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, March 15, 2015, p. 255, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf.

2. Identify and assist in co-opting and coercing 2nd Tier Leaders¹⁴ who will be influential in the post-KFR period .
3. Identify and assist in securing regime scientists involved with nuclear weapons development after regime collapse.
4. Provide local leadership in a post KFR period.
5. Provide intelligence support to ROK forces and liaison between ROK Force, ROKG agencies, and Korean organizations and agencies in the north. (Note: A resistance force supported by the ROKG can be a key transition element leading to unification.)

The remainder of this paper will provide an overview tailored to Korea for how to assist a resistance among the Korean people living in the north with the objective of incorporating the resistance into support for unification. The focus will be on the outline of a campaign plan to support the strategic end state of unification but it will use the classic seven unconventional warfare phases to describe some of the campaign actions that will assist the ROK-U.S. alliance in developing resistance in North Korea. U.S. doctrine for unconventional warfare will form the basis for this overview; however, ROK and U.S. forces are inter-operable within the special operations mission. Although the foundation is military, more than the military is required to be successful. Political leadership, intelligence, information and influence activities are required and in fact George Kennan first outlined the concept in 1948 in his call for political warfare:

Kennan called for “the logical application of Clausewitz’s doctrine in time of peace.” While stopping short of the direct kinetic confrontation between two countries’ armed forces, “*political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation’s command . . . to achieve its national objectives.*” A country embracing Political Warfare conducts “both overt and covert” operations in the absence of declared war or overt force-on-force hostilities. Efforts “range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures. . . , and ‘white’ propaganda to such covert operations as *clandestine support of ‘friendly’ foreign elements,*

14. 2nd Tier Leaders defined as those who have regional political and military power and influence but who are not members of the core of the Kim family regime. An example is a Corps Commander outside of Pyongyang.

'black' psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states."¹⁵

Today the U.S. Army Special Operations Command builds on this concept and describes political warfare this way:

"Political Warfare emerges from the premise that rather than a binary opposition between "war" and "peace," the conduct of international relations is characterized by continuously evolving combinations of collaboration, conciliation, confrontation, and conflict. As such, during times of interstate "peace," the U.S. government must still confront adversaries aggressively and conclusively through all means of national power. When those adversaries practice a form of Hybrid Warfare employing political, military, economic, and criminal tools below the threshold of conventional warfare, the U.S. must overmatch adversary efforts though without large-scale, extended military operations that may be fiscally unsustainable and diplomatically costly. Hence, the U.S. must embrace a form of sustainable "warfare" rather than "war," through a strategy that closely *integrates targeted political, economic, informational, and military initiatives in close collaboration with international partners*. Serving the goals of international stability and interstate peace, this strategy amounts to "Political Warfare.

... Political Warfare encompasses a spectrum of activities associated with diplomatic and economic engagement, Security Sector Assistance (SSA), novel forms of Unconventional Warfare (UW), and Information and Influence Activities (IIA). Their related activities, programs, and campaigns are woven together into a whole-of-government framework for comprehensive effect. In this regard, Support to Political Warfare is a novel concept in comparison to the last generation of national security thinking and military operational concepts. Yet, Political Warfare is not without recent precursors in U.S. policy and strategy, with the Cold War being a prime example of approaches foreshadowing the current conception."¹⁶

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15. George Kennan, 1948 Policy Planning Staff Memorandum, <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/history/johnson/65ciafounding3.htm>.
 16. United States Army Special Operations Command, "SOF Support to Political Warfare White Paper," March 10, 2015, p. 1, <http://maxoki161.blogspot.com/2015/03/sof-support-to-political-warfare-white.html>.

Political warfare that encompasses unconventional warfare has unique applicability for supporting and shaping the outcome on the Korean Peninsula because it offers a holistic concept that provides a template to incorporate all the elements of national power of both the ROK and the U.S.

Although this is written from a strongly U.S. perspective we should keep in mind that the ROK-U.S. alliance has matured to one of a partnership. What happens on the Korean Peninsula and the outcome of unification are dependent on the strategic choices of the ROK. President Park has already established the final objective, unification of the peninsula. The U.S. has committed to supporting this in the 2009 Joint Vision Statement and reaffirmed the goal during President Park's White House summit in 2013.¹⁷ However, what is most important is while this is an alliance end state, the ROK government should be in the lead with the U.S. providing support to the alliance. So while U.S. doctrine and strategic concepts will be illustrated, readers must keep in mind that it is imperative that the ROK lead this effort.

Before proceeding, we should understand the concept of resistance. There is no commonly accepted definition of resistance; however, at its root, it is a phenomenon of human behavior found in individuals, organizations and movements. The U.S. military defines a resistance movement as "an organized effort by some portion of the civil population of a country to resist the legally established government or an occupying power and to disrupt civil order and stability."¹⁸

There are five attributes to a resistance:

-
17. Joint vision for the alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea, June 16, 2009, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/joint-vision-alliance-united-states-america-and-republic-korea> and TRANSCRIPT: President Park Geun-hye, Republic of Korea - Speech to Joint Session of Congress - May 8, 2013, available at: <http://woodall.house.gov/transcript-president-park-geun-hye-republic-korea-speech-joint-session-congress-may-8-2013>.
 18. Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, p. 210.

Actors: The individual and potential participants in an organized resistance, as well as external contributors and either competing or cooperating resistance groups.

Causes: The collectively expressed rationales for resistance and the individual motivations for participation

Environment: The preexisting and emerging conditions within the political, social, physical, or interpersonal contexts that enable or constrain the mobilization of resistance, directly or indirectly.

Organization: The internal characteristics of a movement: its membership, policies, structure, and culture.

Actions: The means by which actors carry out resistance as they engage in behaviors and activities in opposition to a resisted structure. Actions can encompass both the specific tactics used by a resistance movement and the broader characteristics or repertoires for action (i.e., strategy)¹⁹

As can be seen the phenomenon of resistance is complex and requires deep understanding of the civil population. Although such analysis cannot be the focus of this paper there are some important resources that can be consulted to develop a foundation of knowledge in order to developing the strategy to develop and support resistance among the Korean people living in the north.

First, I would recommend Robert Collins important work on Songbun.²⁰ This provides a critical understanding of the social structure and describing the environment in which a resistance must develop and be sustained. It will assist in determine ways to identify potential actors.

Next, I would recommend the United States Special Operations

19. These attributes are derived from the draft work of a resistance working group that continues to study the phenomenon of resistance for the US Army Special Operations Command. This is draft work and not finally approved.

20. Robert Collins, "Marked for Life: Songbun, North Korea's Social Classification System," Committee For Human Rights in North Korea, 2012 http://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/HRNK_Songbun_Web.pdf.

Command study on engagement with the Korean people living in the north. It covers such topics as identity, social constructs, the North Korean narrative; outlook, implications, and opportunities, and engagement with North Korean culture today and beyond.²¹

Lastly, the work of Ralph Hassig and Kongdon Oh provides a comprehensive look at the life, environment, economy, propaganda and external information and effects, essential what is happening inside North Korea.²²

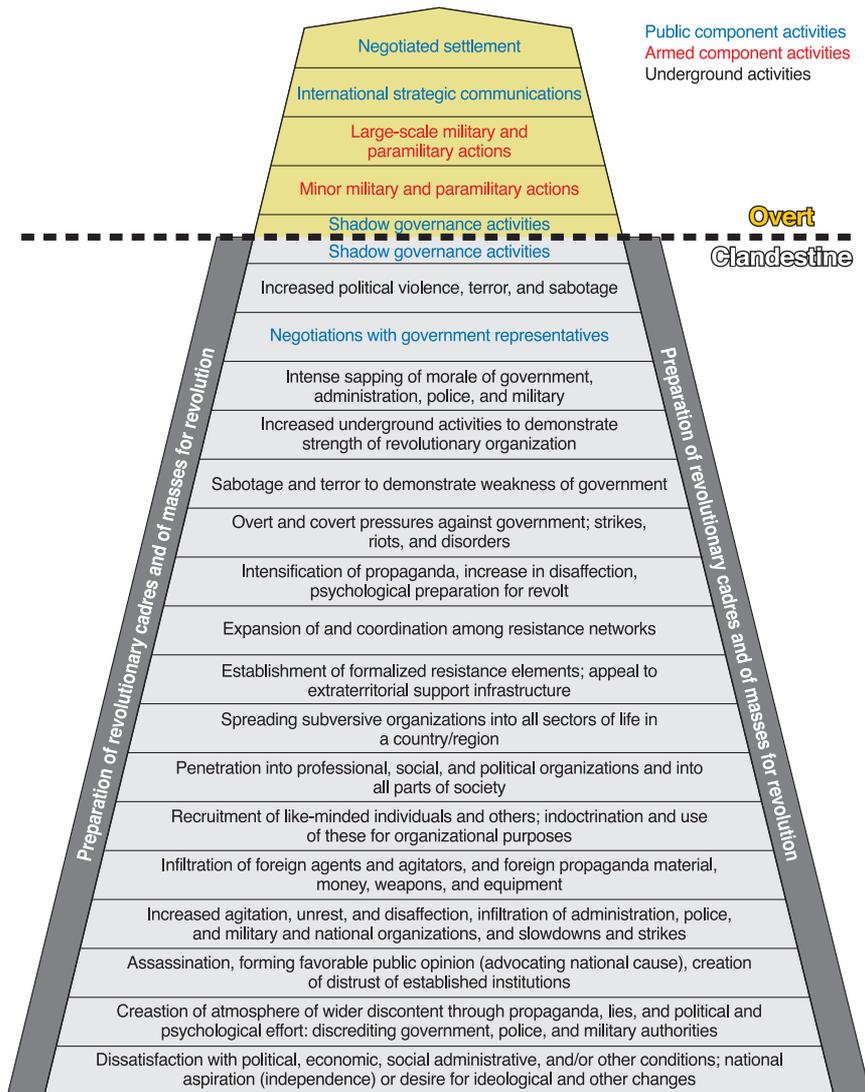
These three works provide the starting point for understanding North Korea for English speakers and determine resistance potential and how to develop it. South Korea has comprehensive studies that include numerous defector interviews (though Robert Collins conducted first person interviews in the North Korean dialect for his work on *songbun*).

The most important aspect of any resistance is the underground. The underground is the central organization that links recruitment, organization, intelligence, subversion and propaganda, strategy development, logistics support and when employed support to a guerrilla force. However, even if a guerrilla force is not raised or employed in combat operations, the underground is the element that will achieve the most desired effects for the ROK-U.S. alliance. It will also establish the most important element of a resistance, the shadow government. It is the shadow government that is most promising for assisting in unification. This can provide the transition mechanism for integration of the political and security functions between north and South. The graphic below (Figure 2) illustrates many of the functions of the underground and while every aspect of the pyramid may not be appropriate unconventional warfare planners will assist the underground with the necessary functions that are necessary for the conditions in the north. Establishing and employing a

21. North Korea Population Engagement Study, Irregular Threats Branch, Socio-Cultural Analysis United States Special Operations Command — Joint Intelligence Center, 2013. Available upon request from USSOCOM.

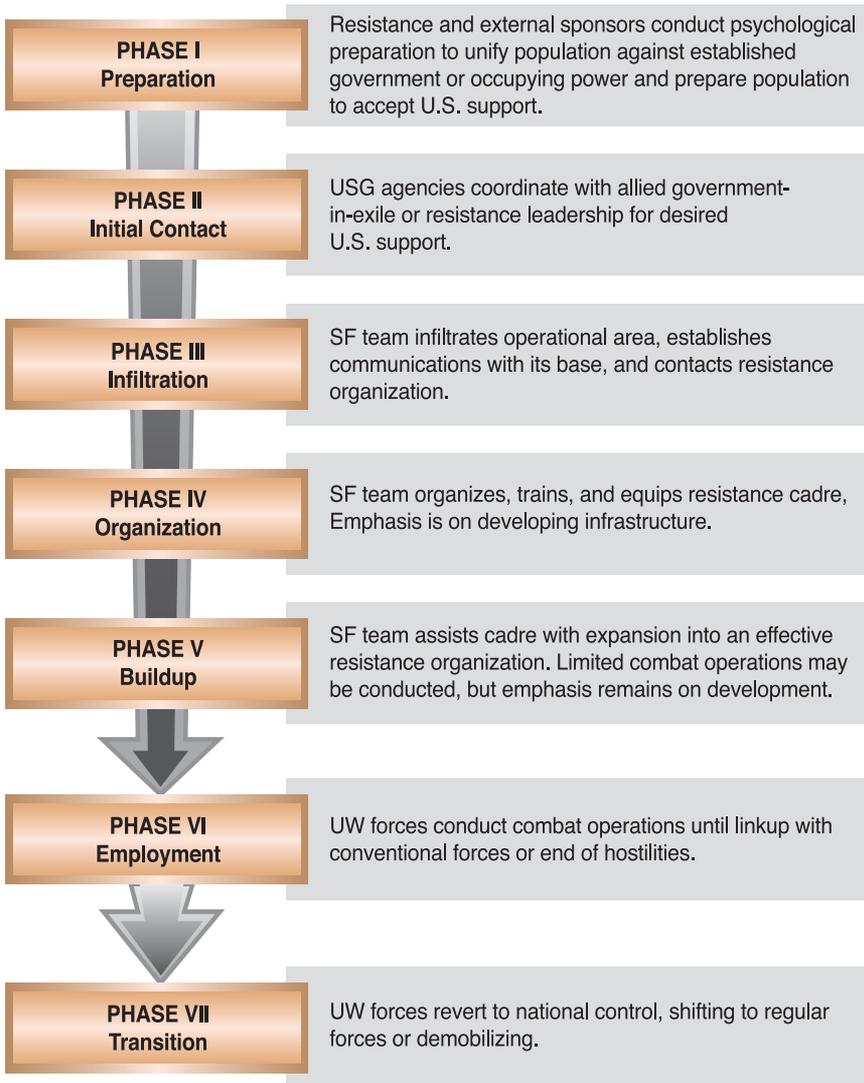
22. Ralph Hassig and Kongdan Oh, *The Hidden People of North Korea: Everyday Life in the Hermit Kingdom* (London: Rowan and Littlefield, 2015)

Figure 2. Activities of an Underground in Revolution, Resistance, and Insurgency²³



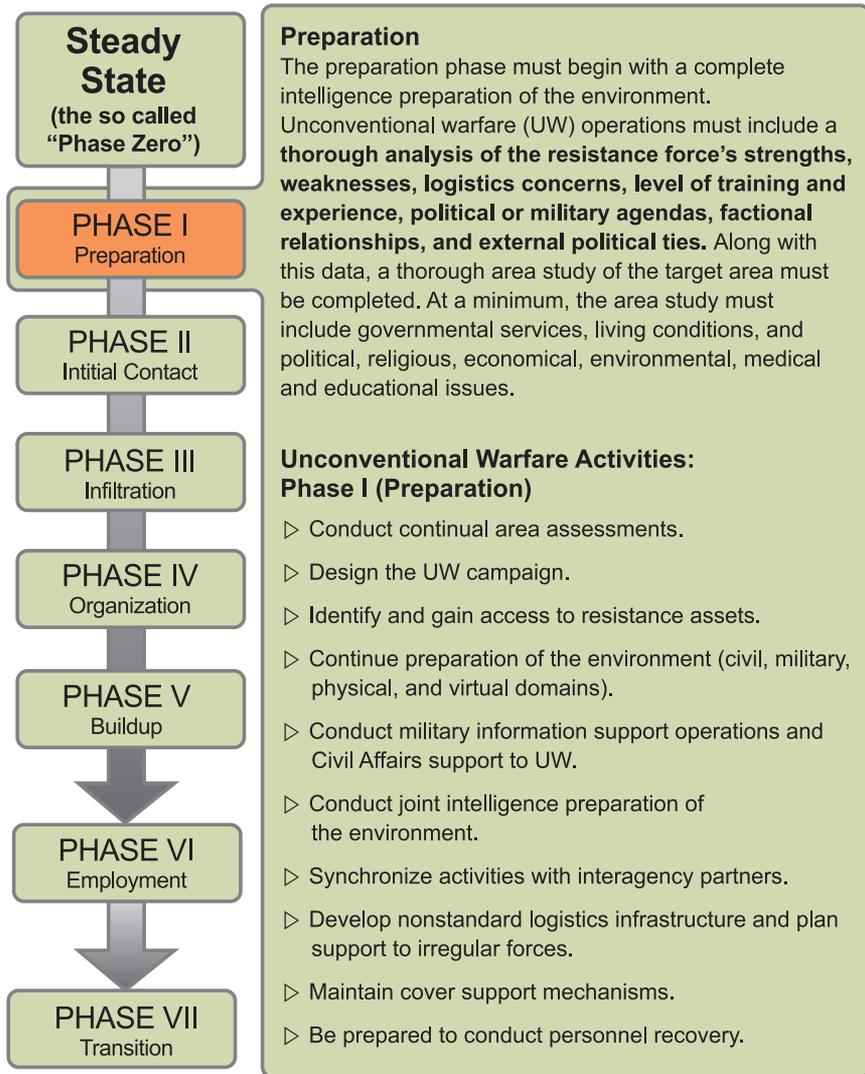
23. United States Army Special Operations Command, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies*, 2nd Edition, January 25, 2013, p. 6, <http://www.soc.mil/ARIS/HumanFactorsS.pdf>.

Figure 3. Seven Phases of Unconventional Warfare²⁴



24. Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Special Forces Unconventional Warfare*, TC 18-01, November 2010, p. 1-9, <https://info.publicintelligence.net/USArmy-UW.pdf>.

Figure 4. Phase I – Preparation²⁵



25. US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, TC 18-01.1 *Unconventional Warfare Mission Planning Guide for the Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha*, April 2015 (Final Draft), pp. 1-6, cited with permission.

guerrilla force may not be appropriate or necessary because the underground is the central focus of all operations and can achieve most of the effects desired by the ROK-U.S. alliance.

The Figure 3 provides an overview of the seven phases of unconventional warfare. It is necessarily tactical focused on the employment of Special Forces to support a resistance. When combined with the above graphic it outlines the major actions taken in an unconventional warfare campaign.

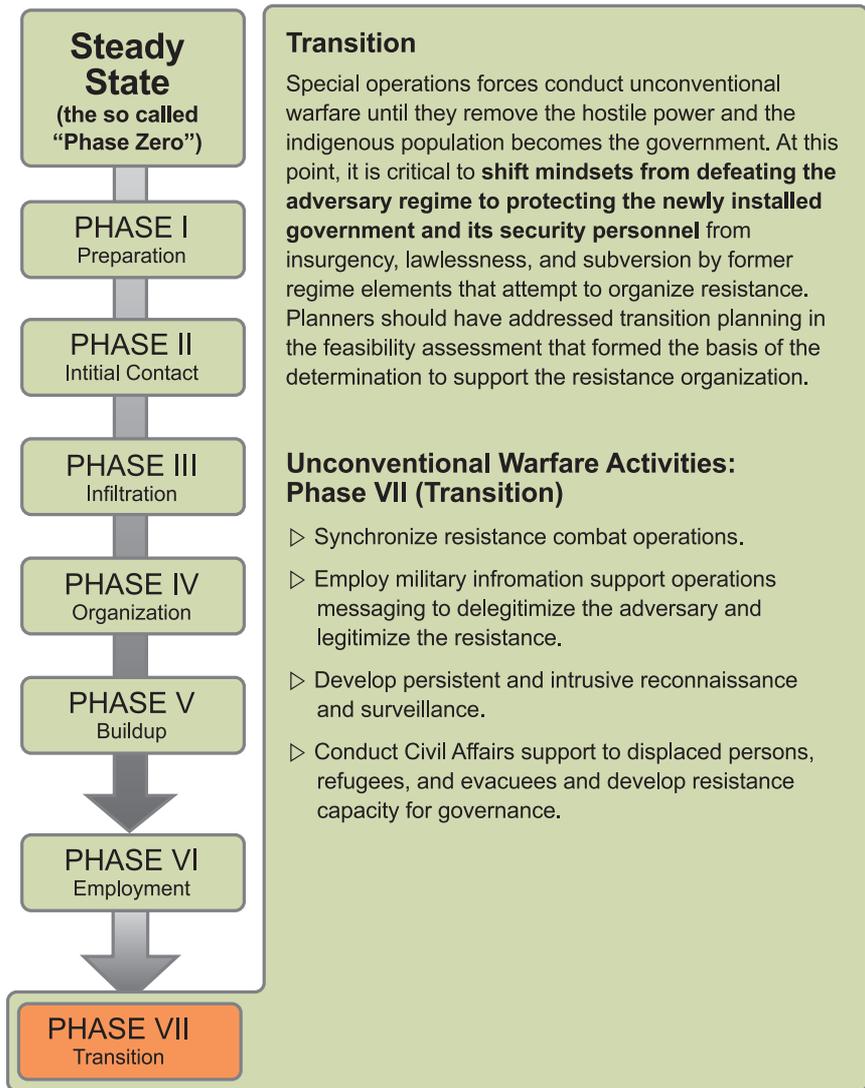
The two most important aspects of UW are Phase I Preparation (Figure 4) and Phase VII Transition (Figure 5). In the interests of space I will only focus on those because they have most impact on unification.

Phase I Preparation is an example of Sun Tzu, "every battle is won before it is fought." Preparation is the key to success in UW. It must begin with a comprehensive assessment of the entire situation and all the elements of resistance.

The second key element of preparation is information and influence activities or psychological operations to prepare the population in the north. The current efforts to get information into the north whether through Korean broadcasts U.S. and international media and defector organizations must be sustained. ROK and U.S. governments should increase efforts or provide support to non-government organizations. Creativity is important but it should be based on understanding of the culture of North Korea as well as the technological capabilities. Because it is so isolated electronically, new ways to penetrate should be developed.

It is imperative that the right themes and messages be developed. As an example the "second tier" leadership (those not in the core of the Kim family regime) and in particular military leaders should hear from the ROK government that policies have been established that those leaders who do not attack the ROK, maintain control of WMD and support unification will have a secure place in a unified Korea and be well compensated. Getting this message to key leaders could influence decision making at critical times during crisis. The population should know that they will be able to keep the land on which they live and work but will be free to pursue opportunities

Figure 5. Phase VII Transition²⁶



26. TC 18-01.1, pp. 1-12.

in a reunified Korea. But these types of themes and messages must be developed based on rigorous study of how the target audience, the Korean people living in the north is likely to receive them. And we should understand that it often takes time to resonate.

Engagement in North Korea is key. The ROK government and ROK citizens should strive for as much contact with Koreans both in the north and in other countries. Every ROK citizen can carry messages to Koreans with whom they engage.

Thorough leadership and key personnel studies should be conducted. The purpose of this is to identify key communicators and assess whether they will support unification and therefore should be engaged and cultivated. Those that are not likely to support unification must be dealt with appropriately.

But if information and influence activities to have an effect in the north the alliance must practice its own "WMD." This means the alliance must focus word, message, and deed or as I like to say word, mind, and deed. We must use the right words that will effect the minds of the target audience and be backed up with deeds. Actions speak louder than words. But a major weakness of the alliance and in particular, the U.S., is the inability or unwillingness to back up the words with deeds. The influence effort must be in total synchronization with actions and vice versa. Influence activities are the foundation of any unconventional warfare strategy.

One group that should be thoroughly identified and studied will be the regime's scientists who develop its weapons of mass destruction. They will need to be protected and recovered by the ROK government to prevent them from selling their skills to the highest bidder. This is a key task for the underground as it can develop and operate a mechanism to locate, surveil, and if necessary exfiltrate them before or during any chaotic transition or regime collapse.

Another perhaps counterintuitive effort should be to focus intelligence operations around the world on the regime's illicit networks. This is important to both prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons and materials in time of crisis or regime collapse. All members of North Korea's Office 39 should be identified and targeted. However,

these members also should be targeted for recruitment, as their knowledge and influence could be very useful during crisis and the process of unification.

These are just some of the areas that must be addressed during the preparation phase. In addition, the information and influence activities must be a key priority in every phase through transition and ultimate unification.

The transition phase is the key to unification. If the resistance with support from the ROK-U.S. alliance has been successful and the Kim family regime is no longer capable of exercising power, the shadow government developed by the resistance will be able to assume power and immediately reach out to the ROK to seek unification. At this critical point where there is a vacuum of power, the resistance will be able to step up and fill it and provide immediate leadership.

We have defined regime collapse as the inability of the Kim family regime to govern from the center and the loss of coherency and support of the military and security forces. We have always posited that when this happens instability, chaos, and conflict will occur. However, if an unconventional warfare campaign plan is designed and well executed by Korean people living in the north it is possible when this collapse occurs the resistance will have infiltrated key organizations within the North Korea government and military and developed an alternative structure, e.g., a shadow government. With support and the promised policies of the ROK, there will be a better chance to a transition to the unification process with a less likelihood of conflict.

This proposal is not without risk. First, there will be risk to the Korean people living in the north. It will be difficult to identify and make contact with potential actors who would assume leadership of a resistance. The North Korean suppression mechanism remains dangerous to the people and actions by ROK UW forces could compromise them.

Some will argue that this will reduce the chances for diplomacy to prevail. While that is possible, we should also keep in mind that the regime expects that we are trying to undermine its legitimacy to bring it down. We should not shy away from a course of action that

could achieve long-term positive effects especially when the alternative is regime collapse or war with no effective follow-on plan for unification.

This is also a campaign that cannot be executed by amateurs and it must have the full support of the ROK-U.S. alliance. If the decision is made to execute this course of action, it must be fully resourced and given the time to develop. Expectations must be managed, but it also will require support in successive administrations.

This course of action can also provide options during crisis. The larger the resistance grows, the more influence it can have over the people. Most importantly, it can serve the purpose of a transition government with which the ROK can work during the unification process.

Naysayers will argue that U.S. Special Forces cannot conduct unconventional warfare in an area that is so denied as North Korea because they do not fit in and would be easily compromised. However, U.S. Special Forces do not have to operate inside North Korea, at least initially and most likely for a long period of time until conditions are right. The critical tasks that need to be taught to a resistance force can be provided to the right Koreans, and in particular those Koreans who have escaped from the north, and they in turn can infiltrate to assist in the organization, training, and operations of a resistance. There are many new and innovative ways to conduct modern unconventional warfare to support a resistance; however, I will leave that to the professionals at Fort Bragg, Fort Lewis, and Seongnam and the Special Warfare Command in the Republic of Korea.

This paper has only provide a very rudimentary overview of the potential for unconventional warfare in support of the ROK-U.S. alliance and unification. In-depth planning is required to design the necessary comprehensive strategy and plan

What should have next is for ROK and U.S. military experts to conduct a feasibility assessment for an unconventional warfare campaign. If they determine it feasible, the national security councils of the ROK and U.S should begin the process of developing a plan with the ROK in the lead and the U.S. in support. This will need to be a

whole of government plan and require the national security council to synchronize or orchestrate all the elements of national power.

The national security councils should consider establishing a permanent combined strategy working group to manage the actions of both nations. Details for such an organization can be found in a National Defense University paper, "Beyond the Nuclear Crisis: A Strategy for the Korean Peninsula."²⁷

In conclusion, if we believe that there is a significant threat of a resistance and insurgency that will prevent or hinder unification, we should consider developing and shaping that resistance now to prevent it from challenging unification. An effective resistance against the Kim family regime could provide increased options for the ROK-U.S. alliance and provide support in innumerable ways some of which have been described here but these have only been the tip of the proverbial iceberg. A combined ROK-U.S. strategy group could develop a supporting plan based on resistance and unconventional warfare that could mitigate the threats to and support unification.

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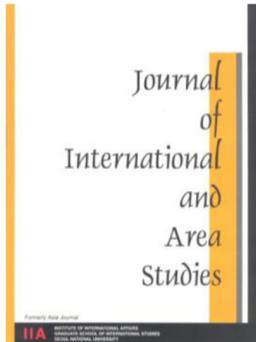
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Vol. 3, No. 1 May 2015

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