

A New Dawn For Korea

Narayanan Komerath and Jose Gonzalez

Abstract

The evolution of the DPRK crisis is examined in the context of the national interests of DPRK's immediate neighbors. The role of the PRC is highlighted, considering its history, geopolitical interests and perceptions of strategic opportunities. A strategic direction based on the eventual goal of reunification is conceptualized. It is argued that taking this route would avoid the grave dangers that attend possible PRC exploitation of recent U.S. policies. Current U.S. moves provide encouraging signs along such a direction.

Introduction

The current standoff between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea offers an excellent case study in geopolitics. It directly involves three of the five veto-wielding members of the United Nations Security Council, plus the two Koreas and Japan in "six-party multilateral talks", as well as public interest from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.S. Congress, White House, State Department and Pentagon. Entangled in this is the circus involving Pakistan, its nuclear bazaar tycoon Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan and its President, General Pervaiz Musharraf, the so-called frontline ally of the United States in the War on Terror.

The crisis provides a textbook case of escalation and response calibration in superpower as well as asymmetric conflict. The issues span the economic, historical and geopolitical as well as the military and technological.

Our paper started as an assigned debating position in a university seminar course on strategic security issues, and as such reflects only our opinions. Recent events have refined our understanding, but have also confirmed that the line of reasoning we take is not adequately represented in the western literature on strategic affairs.

2. Background

The Korean War of 1950–53 was fought largely between the US and the PRC, though North and South Koreans died in large numbers¹. The war began with an invasion of southern Korea by a northern-based army, demanding reunification under Communist rule after the Second World War ended the Japanese occupation of Korea. US-led UN forces intervened, as did the Communist powers USSR and People's Republic of China (PRC). The war ended in an Armistice negotiated largely between the US and the PRC, but not a formal peace treaty.

While the southern Republic of Korea (ROK) is one of the world's most prolific industrial powers, with a moderately free government and high standards of living, the North (DPRK) is desperately poor, backward, and is ruled by a hereditary dictatorship. As recently as

¹ For a Chinese perspective on the relationship between PRC and DPRK from the Korean War to present, see the Chinese Foreign Ministry website at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/>.

February 2004, the UN has declared DPRK to be on the verge of famine². A US economic embargo and the more recent designation of DPRK as a terrorist state denied opportunities for World Bank or other aid to the DPRK regime, whose own repressive and isolationist policies, abduction of foreign citizens and other aggressive actions certainly inspire no confidence in the intentions, or even in the rationality of its regime.

The US is technically still in a state of war with DPRK, and the border between ROK and DPRK remains tense. Commando raids and naval clashes have occurred periodically, and the Demilitarized Zone, a swath of defoliated and mined land between the armies, remains lethal.

Attempts to defuse the Korean crisis have stumbled on the basic problem of distrust and assumed malice between the protagonists. Actions on both sides reinforce these assumptions. In the late '80s, the regime began to use the threat of nuclearization³ to demand direct negotiations with the US⁴ towards normalization of relations. This led to the denuclearization agreement of 1991. In 1994, the "Agreed Framework" promised that DPRK would continue to abide by the NPT and cease construction of further nuclear reactors whose fuel rods could provide weapons-grade plutonium. In return, the US would supply 500,000 barrels of heavy oil per year, until two light-water nuclear reactors were completed with US and Japanese participation⁵. In October 2002, North Korean officials informed visiting US diplomat James Kelly of their uranium enrichment program⁵. In November 2002, the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO) suspended the oil shipments⁵. In December 2002, DPRK announced that they were leaving the NPT, expelled IAEA inspectors⁶ broke seals and removed IAEA monitoring devices from their facilities⁵. The completion of the reactors was scheduled for 2003. However, it was postponed to 2007. Engineers on site told National Public Radio in the US that the intent of their orders was clearly to keep working, but to not complete the reactors. In April 2003 DPRK claimed that they had completed reprocessing of all 8000 fuel rods, and produced enough fissile material

² According to a news report on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" which aired on 9 February 2004, the United Nations' World Food Program said it was running out of food supplies in North Korea. An Agency spokesman announced a reduction in the number of people it feeds there from 6.5 million (nearly 30% of the DPRK population) to a mere 100,000. See <http://www.npr.org/features/feature.php?wflid=1667387>.

³ Wampler, R.A., Ed., "North Korea and Nuclear Weapons: The Declassified U.S. Record. National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 87. April 25, 2003. <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB87/> Excerpt: "By the mid-1980s, CIA analysis discussed not only the components of the nuclear program, but the potential that North Korea would, indeed, seek to develop nuclear weapons. However, the CIA did note the energy-production rationale for the program and the lack of evidence that the North was actually planning to join the nuclear club. The concerns raised by this intelligence prompted U.S. efforts to secure cooperation from Moscow and Beijing, as well as Western supplier nations, in refusing to provide North Korea with materials needed for its nuclear program (see the [ca. January 5, 1985 Department of State Briefing Paper](#)). By the very late 1980s, however, the rapid expansion of the North Korean program was the subject of several analyses."

⁴ Wampler, R.A., Ed., <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB87/> Excerpt: "Freeman's recollections about a still-born step toward opening direct talks with North Korea that might have emerged from a surprising Chinese offer during the first Reagan administration to broker such discussions. This initiative was effectively killed, according to Freeman, by the determined opposition of Paul Wolfowitz,"

⁵ Nicksch, L.A., "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program". Congressional Research Service, Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division, CRS Issue Brief for Congress, Order Code IB91141, Updated Aug. 27, 2003.

⁶ Gwozdecky, M., "IAEA Inspectors to leave North Korea" **IAEA Press Release PR 2002/27**, <http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/PressReleases/2002/prn0227.shtml> Excerpt: "IAEA inspectors in Nyongbyon, DPRK, are making arrangements to leave the country. This is in response to DPRK officials confirming directly to the inspectors that they should leave the country immediately and that the DPRK has decided not to respond to the IAEA Director General's letter urging them to allow inspectors to remain at the Nyongbyon nuclear site."

for several weapons, adding that they already had "other and more powerful" weapons as well⁷. At the same time, irrefutable (for the US) proof surfaced of a long-known exchange of missiles and nuclear technology between Pakistan and DPRK, as well as Pakistan and Middle East nations such as Libya, Iran and possibly Saudi Arabia. Risky ocean shipments⁸ (some of which have been intercepted)⁹ were supplemented with secure flights between Pakistan and DPRK, over and through the PRC¹⁰. In this context, the Missile Technology control Regime (MTCR) and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) hold little credibility for observers.

Faced with a gradual escalation of the DPRK's nuclear posture, the US administration and Congress reacted with increasing indignation, steadily narrowing options open to the US. Thus in 2004, there is strong debate on the remaining options for dealing with DPRK, prominently including military action¹¹. While an unprovoked US invasion of DPRK may sound far-fetched to Americans, the DPRK no doubt noted what the Korea Times reported in November 2004¹² regarding US training to attack DPRK with up to 30 nuclear weapons, and

⁷ United Press International, "North Korea Suggests H-Bomb" NewsMax.com Wires Friday, Oct. 18, 2002. <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2002/10/17/185443.shtml> Excerpt: "The Bush administration disclosed the news late Wednesday in a series of apparently orchestrated leaks to select U.S. media. The ambiguous "more powerful" comment has been interpreted as a threat of biological or chemical weapons, but other meanings are possible, said Michael Levi, director of Federation of American Scientists' Strategic Security Project."

⁸ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, IISS, "Pakistan and North Korea: Dangerous Counter-Trades". IISS Strategic Comment, Vol.8, Issue 9, November 2002.

<http://www.ceip.org/files/projects/npp/pdf/Pakistan%20and%20North%20Korea.pdf> Excerpts: "In 1999, Indian officials..seized the North Korean ship Ku Wol San at Kandla, Gujarat. ..carrying missile components and metal casings to Pakistan ... 22 technical manuals for Scud-type ballistic missiles".

⁹ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, IISS, "Pakistan and North Korea: Dangerous Counter-Trades". IISS Strategic Comment, Vol.8, Issue 9, November 2002.

<http://www.ceip.org/files/projects/npp/pdf/Pakistan%20and%20North%20Korea.pdf> Excerpts: "In 1996, Taiwanese officials seized 15 tons of ammonium perchlorate- an oxidizing agent used on most modern solid propellants – on a freighter bound from North Korea to Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Committee.

¹⁰ Smith, Charles R., "North Korea Nukes Clinton Legacy Asian Arms Race Result of Appeasement Policy" Jan. 8, 2003. NewsMax, <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2003/1/7/164846.shtml> Excerpt: "Beijing's indirect assistance includes allowing Pakistani C-130 cargo flights over China to Pyongyang that carry key equipment for nuclear weapons production. The flights return to Pakistan with North Korean No Dong missile parts ... In 1994, the Wall Street Journal revealed that Chinese-made CSS-2 missile technology had found its way into North Korean hands. China has also allowed North Korea to ship SCUD missiles through its territory for Middle Eastern customers. According to a Canadian undercover operative, North Korean agents moved dismantled SCUD missiles through China into Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. The allegations proved to be correct because U.S. satellites were able to follow Chinese-made M-11 missiles bound for Pakistan over the same land route in 2000. The illegal export of M-11 missiles brought swift sanctions against Beijing by the Bush administration.. In recent months China has been much more overt about assisting Pyongyang with its nuclear weapons program. In 2002, China sold Pyongyang a large shipment of tributyl phosphate, a key chemical used to extract plutonium and uranium from spent fuel rods for atomic bombs."

¹¹ Orcutt, D.J., "Carrot, Stick or Sledgehammer: US Policy Options for North Korean Nuclear Weapons". Institute for National Security Studies, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado. INSS Occasional Paper 56, August 2004.

¹² Staines, R., "US Trained for Strikes on NK". Excerpts: "'Japan's Kyodo News Agency reported Sunday that as part of the U.S.' ``scenario 5027,'` 24 F15-E bombers flew simulation missions at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base in North Carolina to drop mock nuclear bombs on a firing range in Florida between January and June 1998. It quoted the intelligence reports as saying that AWACS and KC-135 mid-air refueling planes also took part in the drills to prepare pilots for missions against North Korea from air bases in the U.S. ... The newly declassified documents also showed the U.S. kept nuclear weaponry in South Korea until at least 1998, despite officially claiming it had withdrawn all nuclear warheads in 1991, Kyodo reported... Washington had conducted drills on the use of nuclear weapons in South Korea since 1958 and in one case fired a mock nuclear weapon at Kunsan Air Base along the southwestern coast of South Korea in 1991, the reports said."

the continued presence of nuclear weapons in ROK through 1998, far beyond the stated withdrawal of 1991. On the diplomatic side, the US refuses bilateral talks with DPRK, but celebrates multilateral six-party talks including the US, DPRK, PRC, Japan, Russia and ROK. These talks are hosted by the PRC. President Bush pointed frequently, during his re-election campaign, to these talks as proof of his success in forging multilateral approaches to conflict resolution. However, with his reelection, the prospect of military action again looms. The public perception in the US has been driven to focus on the DPRK regime and the threat associated with its presumed irrationality on this complex issue. This perception in our view constrains freedom of action and increases the dangers of a massive defeat for US interests.

3. DPRK's Neighbors and Their Interests

In the wake of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and a potential for conflict in other parts of the Middle East, the United States, in shaping its foreign policy strategy, might benefit from an optimized use of its full strategic resource spectrum including economic, political, psychological, and cultural tools¹³. The deployment of this broader strategic toolbox is what Political Scientist Joseph Nye calls the use of "soft power"¹⁴ and is the basis of what follows.

DPRK's immediate neighbors on the map are the PRC, ROK, Russia and Japan. The US has some control and understanding of the interests of Japan and ROK. Russia today does not appear to have any strong interests in DPRK. The largest actor in the region is the People's Republic of China (PRC). Here we consider the role of the PRC carefully and appraise its interests, power, and influence in DPRK. We outline these factors in a historic and modern US policy context and consider a conceptual five-point strategy.

3.1 Russia

The Soviet Union supplied the original 5MW experimental graphite reactor at Yongbyon (60 mi from Pyongyang) to DPRK in the 1950s. CIA reports estimate that several Soviet technical personnel may have worked in the DPRK, and DPRK personnel have trained in the Soviet Union⁵. Soviet willingness to share nuclear technology with the DPRK appears to have ended in the early 1970s, given DPRK's close relations with the PRC. For instance, Soviet KGB agents who boarded the captured US Navy ship "USS Pueblo" in the 1970s were reported to have found that all sensitive equipment had already been stripped out and given to the PRC. Niksch⁵ appears to confirm the notion that the USSR was not primarily involved in the 1980s construction of larger reactors or in the weapons program.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, concern about the recruitment of Soviet nuclear experts¹⁵ mounted, and there have been reports of the Russian government intercepting and preventing the transfer of such personnel to the DPRK¹⁶. Since Boris Yeltsin came to

¹³ In an editorial piece in Science Magazine, Neureiter argues for a return to the soft power strategies of the 1990s. See Neureiter, **Talking with North Korea**, *Science* 2004 305: 1677.

¹⁴ Nye, Joseph S., Jr. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. Public Affairs, 2004.

¹⁵ CNS, "Chronology of North Korea's Missile and Trade Developments:1992-1993"
<http://cns.miis.edu/research/korea/chr9293.htm> Excerpt: "February 1992 - Anatoliy Rubtsov begins efforts to recruit strategic weapons specialists in Miass for employment abroad, including in North Korea, offering wages of \$1,500 to \$4,000 per month. The number of Russian specialists eventually involved is at least 60. UPI, 10 February 1993, in Executive News Service, 10 February 1993. Mikhail Popov, Rabochaya Tribuna (Moscow), 11 February 1993, p.3; in JPRS-UST-93-002, 8 April 1993, p.52."

¹⁶ CNS, "Chronology of North Korea's Missile and Trade Developments:1992-1993"
<http://cns.miis.edu/research/korea/chr9293.htm>. Excerpts: "October 1992- Ten Russian nuclear physicists are

power¹⁷, Russia sought to improve relations with the ROK, and in the process cooled off relations with the DPRK regime. This cooling-off was reversed under Putin¹⁷. Mikheev¹⁸ summarizes recent Russian policy towards DPRK, stating that the policy has become more balanced between the two Koreas compared to the Yeltsin-era preference for ROK. The reasons for this were stated to be disillusionment with the payoffs from relations with ROK, and concern about being marginalized in multilateral negotiations. Russia signed a new cooperation treaty with DPRK, and President Putin visited Pyongyang in 2000¹⁹. Russian interest in the Korean peninsula now appears to be mostly to compete for engineering projects such as railway^{17,20} and electric power lines and supplying agricultural machinery.

Concern about a DPRK nuclear arsenal does not appear to be high on the Russian agenda. Niskch²¹ claims a KGB report that DPRK had a nuclear device as early as 1990. In 2002, Russia voiced strong concerns about DPRK's restarting of its Yongbyon reactor (BFR). However, a Russian Minister declared in 2003 that he does not believe that North Korea has developed nuclear weapons, since they have not tested any. In June 2004, the DPRK and Russia signed an agreement on technological cooperation²² for 2005-2007.

3.2 Japan

Japan's official policy²³ *"aims to normalize the relationship with North Korea in a manner that would contribute to the peace and stability of the Northeast Asian region, in close coordination with the United States of America and the Republic of Korea."* Japanese concerns regarding DPRK are listed as primarily about the abduction and murder of its citizens, and secondly about the DPRK nuclear and missile programs. On August 31 1998, a North Korean multi-stage rocket overflew Japan on a trajectory, which appeared to have ended in the Pacific. The DPRK claimed that it was a space launch²⁴, and accused Japan of over-reacting

prevented from traveling to North Korea. Yonhap (Seoul), 21 December 1992; in JPRS-TND-93-002, 15 January 1993, p.6. (Note: There are two groups of experts attempting to travel to North Korea, one composed of missile specialists and the other of nuclear specialists.). Also "15 October 1992 - A group of 32 Russian engineers, planning to fly to North Korea to assist in the modernization of ballistic missiles, is intercepted by Russian police at Moscow International Sheremetyevo-2 Airport. "8 August 1992..Thirty-six former Soviet nuclear physicists are stopped at Khabarovsk airport while attempting to travel to North Korea."

¹⁷ Moltz, J.C., "Russian Policy on the North Korean Nuclear Crisis". North Korea Special Collection, Center for Non-Proliferation Studies, April 2003. <http://cns.miis.edu/research/korea/ruspol.htm>

¹⁸ Mikheev, V., "Russian Policy Towards North Korea". #38 September 22, 2000.

<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/pac0038.html>

¹⁹ KCNA: "DPRK-Russia Joint Declaration", July 20, 2000. At website of School of Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Studies. http://russia.shaps.hawaii.edu/fp/russia/russia_dprk_jd_e_20000721.html

²⁰ITAR-TASS, cited in "Improvement of the relations with Russia" Korea-Is-One! February 27, 2004

http://www.korea-is-one.org/article.php3?id_article=88

²¹ Niskch (CRS_030827_IB91141) cites a 1992 Russian newspaper "Argumenty I Fakty" report, repeated in "Izvestia" in 1994 of a 1990 KGB report to the Soviet Central Committee. The KGB report was that DPRK had completed assembly of a nuclear device at Yangbon, but decided not to test it yet.

²² DPRK Ministry of Reunification website: "North Korea's Adoption of the Latest Science & Technology This Year " .Serial No. 718 (November 19 to November 25, 2004)

www.unikorea.go.kr/en/northkorea/northkorea.php

²³ Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <http://www.mofa.go.jp>

²⁴ Korean Central News Agency (KCNA): "Successful launch of first satellite in DPRK". Excerpt: "...The rocket was launched in the direction of 86 degrees at a launching station in Musudan-ri, Hwadae county, North Hamgyong Province at 12:07 August 31, Juche 87 (1998) and correctly put the satellite into orbit at 12 hours 11 minutes 53 seconds in four minutes 53 seconds. ..The first stage . separated ..95 seconds after the launch and fell on ..East Sea of Korea 253 km off the launching station, that is 40 degrees 51 minutes north latitude 132 degrees 40 minutes east longitude. The second stage opened the capsule in 144 seconds, separated itself from the rocket in 266 seconds and

in ascribing hostile intent to the DPRK (BFR). Russia confirmed²⁵ that a DPRK launch had indeed succeeded in orbiting a satellite, which was broadcasting songs in praise of Kim Jong Il. The US admitted this later but called the satellite "non-functional".²⁶ Western observers predictably railed against DPRK wasting money on space launches when its population was starving. Whatever the intent, the missile test / space launch appears to have convinced North Korea's customers such as Pakistan and Iran of the viability of its missile technology, and thus earned hard cash for the regime. Japan has provided food and other humanitarian assistance to DPRK. Currently, Japan subscribes to the six-party affirmation that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is a goal, with a freeze on the DPRK nuclear program as a start towards that goal.

Japanese Concerns and Scenarios

There are two drastic avenues for Japanese reaction the DPRK becoming a nuclear weapon state. First is a decision by Japan to go nuclear. This would not be a terrible event in itself, because the Japanese have more enriched uranium stored in their facilities than any other country in the world, and are well known to be capable of going nuclear within a very short time should they decide. The Diet discussed the nuclear option in public in the early 1990s following public disclosure of DPRK's nuclear moves. There is a high probability that, Japan is, or can become in short order, a covert nuclear weapon state. The more interesting question here is how secure North Koreans feel about Japan in possession of so much enriched uranium, given historical reality – Japan has invaded North Korea a lot more than North Korea has ever attacked Japan. So the logical deduction here is that Japan would hesitate to go overtly nuclear, since they have (a) no need to and (b) they would increase their own insecurity by precipitating a pre-emptive attack by North Korea.

The second drastic avenue is a pre-emptive conventional attack by Japan on North Korean nuclear facilities. We believe that this too can be ruled out, because the end game here would be worse for the Japanese than might occur in the case of an American pre-emptive attack.

fell on the open waters of the Pacific 1,646 km off from the launching station, that is 40 degrees 13 minutes north latitude 149 degrees 07 minutes east longitude. The third stage put the satellite into orbit 27 seconds after the separation of the second stage. The satellite is running along the oval orbit 218.82 km in the nearest distance from the earth and 6,978.2 km in the farthest distance. Its period is 165 minutes 6 seconds. ...It will contribute to promoting scientific research for peaceful use of outer space. ... now transmitting the melody of the immortal revolutionary hymns "Song of General Kim Il Sung" and "Song of General Kim Jong Il" and the Morse signals "Juche Korea" in 27 MHz." Also, "The spokesman for the Foreign Ministry .. What is more intolerable is Japan's behavior. Although they have no information on what happened, the Japanese authorities, blindly accepting rumours ..are threatening .."countermeasures." .. Japan must not forget that it is our right, ..to demand apologies and compensation for its past crimes... It is an internationally recognized right of a sovereign state to peacefully use the space. ...We have never criticized the United States and Japan for having launched artificial satellites. We are well aware that these satellites have been used for espionage on our country. ...Japan must be aware that ..involvement in belligerent ..is tantamount to a declaration of war against the DPRK."

²⁵ BBC: "Russia verifies satellite launch" Saturday, September 5, 1998. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/asia-pacific/newsid_164000/164643.stm

²⁶ James McIntyre, CNN and AP: "U.S. now believes North Korea launched a satellite after all" <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9809/14/n.korea.satellite/> Excerpts: "State Department spokesman James Rubin confirmed Monday that North Korea attempted to "orbit a very small satellite".."Although the satellite failed to reach orbit, the U.S. government believes that..." But "Sen. Craig Thomas, R-Wyoming, agreed, saying that "NASA believes the launch placed a satellite -- albeit apparently a nonfunctioning one -- into orbit." "North Korea, meanwhile, continues to claim that the satellite, dubbed "Kwangmyongsong No. 1," or "Bright Star," completed its 100th orbiting of the Earth on Monday."

The third option is to do nothing, but maintain the status quo – an American nuclear umbrella for Japan. Given the presence of American military assets in Japan (which is what North Korea periodically rails against) there is no doubt that a nuclear attack on Japan would seriously impact American assets, and trigger massive retaliation from the Americans, with or without explicit promises to this effect.

The third option is by far the most likely. Tokyo is less than 700 miles from Pyongyang. A massive conventional strike using North Korean ballistic missiles would devastate Japan. Japanese retaliation would probably be too late to catch the regime's worst offenders. Thus deterrence of an all-out conventional attack is quite as important to the Japanese as deterrence of a sneak nuclear attack.

So far, the publicized part of the Japanese approach appears to be a large increase in monitoring and detection efforts, with the launch of two spy satellites, as well as a debate on enhanced theater missile defense²⁷. American observers interpret this as a desire to supplement American intelligence, and "reduce dependence" on the US for timely intelligence. However, it has an obvious flip side – the development of a Japanese capability to verify US claims of North Korean belligerence in order to avoid repeating the 1998 "missile launch" incident which left the Japanese looking foolish.

Ultimately, Japan is not going to feel secure until the regime in North Korea is changed – or the North Korean economy becomes so strong that their perceived cost of going to war approaches that of Japan.

3.3 South Korea

While the DPRK Ministry of Reunification appears to be engaged in trying to build relations with various other nations, ROK also has published "Reunification Policies"²⁸. The "three guiding principles" of its policy are: Zero tolerance for aggressive acts, statement of lack of hostile intent to either destroy or absorb North Korea, and establishment of peace to open the way for reconciliation and cooperation. Significantly, the ROK states a preference for bilateral Korean discussions²⁸: *"It is the government's firm conviction that solutions to all outstanding issues facing the two Koreas must come from Koreans themselves, and are possible only by convincing North Korea to participate in open Inter-Korean dialogue. In addition, all international concerns relevant to establishing peace and relief of tensions on the peninsula will be resolved through international dialogue such as the four-party talks."*

The official caution about reunification reflects rising public pressure. Levin and Han²⁹ report on a 1999 poll of ROK public opinion. They found ROK citizens skeptical of reunification,

²⁷ RAND report MR1040. <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1040/>

²⁸ "Reunification Policies". <http://www.nis.go.kr/eng/security/reunification09.html> Excerpt: "The Government of the People of the ROK declares the driving purpose of its North Korea policy: to establish a triumvirate of peace, reconciliation, and cooperation for marked improvement of Inter-Korean relations. Priority at this moment must be given to peaceful coexistence of the ROK and the DPRK over attempts at hasty unification. Only when lasting peace is established on the peninsula can efforts be made for true reconciliation and cooperation."

²⁹ Levin, N.D., Han, Y.S., *The Shape of Korea's Future: South Korean Attitudes Toward Unification and Long-Term Security Issues*. RAND MR-1092-CAPP, 1999. ISBN: 0-8330-2759-X, 48p. Excerpt: *"Koreans are decidedly and increasingly hesitant about unification."*

though emotionally in favor of it. Some questions were evident on the role of the US-ROK relationship, post-reunification.

Pollack and Lee³⁰ looked at the roles of ROK's neighbors and the US in what appeared to be a strong move towards Korean unification in 1999. The immediate driver was the projected economic collapse of DPRK. The instability of the regime posed major concerns. They did point to three scenarios under which they felt that the PRC might intervene to prop up the DPRK regime indefinitely: one of these was a perceived ROK-US move to "embark on unilateral actions to counter instability in the north, which China believes would undermine" long-term Chinese interests. What are those long-term Chinese interests? Western experts appear to be in the dark on that issue²⁷, summarizing Chinese assertions on Korea as "highly elliptical". We venture that long-term Chinese interests include peace, stability and progress on the Korean peninsula, but if those can be achieved on Chinese terms with a large increase in Chinese power, prestige and economic competitiveness relative to the US and Japan, then such an outcome would be preferred. Tactical issues and different perspectives on recent developments were discussed at a 1998 Sino-American conference³¹ and an earlier journal article³². The conclusion is that a reunification dominated by ROK would not make PRC comfortable.

Levin and Han³³ summarize (in 2002) the evolution of the "sunshine" policy of engagement with North Korea, initiated in 1998, aimed at eventual reunification. They point out that lack of reciprocity – demonstrable payoff in DPRK response to South Korean largesse – was a major hurdle in advancing the sunshine policy, along with the sharp rise in concerns about DPRK nuclear intentions. Levin predicts that supporters of President Kim Dae Jung and his policy might blame the US for the rise in tensions with DPRK – and that the DPRK may have calculated that in precipitating the collapse of the policy. However, as democratic institutions take hold in ROK and the military stays off the streets, healthy public debate will resume³³ Levin and Han say that majority ROK opinion had lost patience with the actions of DPRK and had vindicated US skepticism.

Armacost et al³⁴ point out that military action against DPRK would in fact estrange the US from the South Korean public – and that U.S. perceptions of the North Korean threat are no longer shared by majority opinion in the ROK. This is a huge change from the 1970s, and must be carefully measured by US policy-makers. One implication is that inducing the US

While they retain a deep emotional commitment to this long-term objective, Koreans increasingly describe themselves as neither particularly eager for unification nor optimistic that it will happen anytime soon."

³⁰ Pollack, J.D., Lee, C.M., "Preparing for Korean Unification: Scenarios and Implications". ISBN:0-833027-21-2, MR-1040-A, 1999, 98p. <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1040/>

³¹ Sino-American Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula: Prospects and Obstacles. Conference Report. US-China Security Cooperation In Northeast Asia May 26-28, 1998 Honolulu, Hawaii
http://www.apcss.org/Publications/Report_US-PRC_98.html

³² Zhao Gancheng, "The Korea Unification and China's Options," SHS Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2, July 1996, pp. 35–51.

³³ Levin, N.D., Han, Y-S., "Sunshine in Korea: The South Korean Debate over Policies Toward North Korea". RAND MR155-CAPP, SBN: 0-8330-3321-2, 2002.

³⁴ Armacost, M., Okimoto, D.I., Shin, G.W., "Addressing the North Korea Nuclear Challenge". Policy Paper, Asia-Pacific Research Center (A/PARC) Institute for International Studies (IIS), Stanford University, April 15, 2003. Excerpt: "Military means would not only exact huge human casualties but also deepen U.S. estrangement from Seoul and diminish prospects for developing a joint strategy with other Asian powers Whereas Washington still considers its troops in South Korea to be an indispensable deterrent and a valuable future bargaining chip, increasing numbers of South Koreans—particularly those in their twenties and thirties—see them, at best, as a necessary inconvenience, and at worst, as an affront to South Korean sovereignty, or an unwelcome interference in its politics.."

into a combative posture, if not actual combat, would serve the interests of the PRC in driving a wedge between the US and its South Korean ally.

In March 2004, Larson et al³⁵ reinforced Armacost's findings in regard to public attitude towards the US. They cited rising anti-US sentiment in 2002 and a divide between the steady commitment of Korean leaders to the ROK-US alliance, and the opinions of the general ROK public. They found sensitivity to perceived impingement on ROK sovereignty, and perceptions of subservience, inequality and unfairness. These were evident in the reaction to minor events such as disputes about an Olympic medal, a road accident involving US troops, etc.

ROK's threat perception of DPRK again bears some similarities with that of Japan. An all-out nuclear attack is not a major fear: American retaliation provides a deterrent. However, any war will cause massive devastation of ROK, with conventional weapons. DPRK's acquisition of nuclear weapons would remove ROK's conventional superiority as a deterrent to limited DPRK attack. Thus the real threat in DPRK acquiring nuclear weapons is that it makes a conventional war more likely. This explains why the ROK gets very uneasy when the US threatens the DPRK. In other words, DPRK's acquisition of nuclear weapons is terrifying because it makes conventional war more likely, both because it removes DPRK inhibitions and because it makes the US move towards war.

3.4 The US Position in the DPRK "Crisis"

The first point to note is that the DPRK situation is a "crisis" as described by Americans in government and the media³⁶. Volumes (including this paper) are written on it, it is debated at numerous conferences, media announcers can look grim and important while mentioning anything about it, and anyone who suggests that it is anything but a crisis is considered a fool or a traitor. This, in our view, is the first major victory of the DPRK's foreign policy. They have achieved a media prominence and "name recognition" probably worth much more in advertising dollars than their entire gross national worth.

US thinking at the highest levels is summarized in a recent book by an officer who worked as a White House Fellow, USAF Major Daniel Orcutt¹¹. He lists tangible US interests in the region: over 500,000 citizens, including 100,000 military personnel; \$500B in trade. The intangible prestige of stopping Communist invasion and countering / balancing the influence of the PRC, Russia and Japan is certainly as huge.

It is futile to attempt a more in-depth discussion of US interests in this article. Thinking and discussion on the DPRK today in the US is so tied-up in the details of the Agreed Framework, the Light Water reactor deal, the Heavy Oil deal, the 8000 Fuel-Rod issue, the missile/satellite issue, the uranium enrichment issue, agriculture, famine, human rights

³⁵ Larson, E.V., Levin, N.D., Baik, S., Savych, B., "Ambivalent Allies? A Study of South Korean Attitudes Toward the U.S.". RAND TR-141-SRF, March 2004. Excerpt: "qualitative historical analyses and our quantitative analyses of the available public opinion data suggest that South Koreans' assessments of the state of U.S.-South Korean relations are greatly influenced by the extent to which new developments appear to impinge on South Korean "sovereignty"; stoke South Koreans' sense of subservience, inequality, or unfairness; or can be successfully exploited by North Korea in its efforts to drive a wedge between the U.S. and South Korea."

³⁶ See, for example, Cooper, Mary H., "CQ Researcher: North Korean Crisis". ISSN: 1056-2036, April 2003 <http://www.cqpress.com/product/Researcher-North-Korean-Crisis-v13.html> Excerpt: "Administration critics say that ignoring North Korea — which may have enough material to build at least one nuclear weapon and could soon produce many more — is a recipe for war."

violations by the regime, the irrationality of Kim Jon Il, the prospects for “taking out” the nuclear capabilities, weapon exports to terrorists, etc. that serious stand-back thinking appears to be lost in the noise.

Is the US seriously considering military options? Orcutt¹¹ cites statements from President Bush that so indicate. Levi³⁷ of the FAS cautions that a military option will have to go all the way to regime change – and this calculation has no doubt occurred to the DPRK regime as well. Because of the small areas and distances, and extremely high force concentrations, Orcutt points out that whoever starts the hostilities has a huge advantage. One consequence is explained by Orcutt: that a DPRK military commander told a US counterpart at Panmunjom that they did not intend to wait around for the US to build up and do to them what the US did to the Iraqi military. The US is under no illusions. Although there are some who believe that North Korea can be crushed in 30 days at minimal cost, the minimal cost is still huge. Other scenarios are vastly more terrifying. For one thing, the DPRK is estimated to have some 11,000 artillery pieces in hardened artillery sites, and a large number of missiles and chemical weapons arrayed within striking distance of Seoul – and one-third of ROK’s population. For another, they have some 4000 underground facilities dug since the 1950s to counter US air power. In addition, they have a unique resource: “Special forces” exceeding 100,000, which may be used as the first attacking force, and continue to wage asymmetric warfare in the longer term. Orcutt’s estimates of the US power that can be mustered include shifting forces from Iraq swiftly. The implications of this calculation are considered later in this paper.

One interesting snippet in Orcutt’s book is the following statement: *“Will China provide North Korea support during a second Korean War? Second to South Korea in its unwillingness to support the use of US military force, China strongly opposes this policy option. The United States has to assume that China will not commit ground forces, or US policy makers must fundamentally reconsider the use of military force.”* Comparisons to the 1950s are perhaps unfair, but it also may be worth remembering that when General MacArthur’s forces drove into North Korea, China was a war-ravaged, starving nation coming off the horrors of Japanese occupation and an equally brutal civil war, and their forces were equipped with primitive weapons. This did not appear to have much impact on either their initiative or their persistence. Today China is the world’s #2 superpower.

Orcutt summarizes the situation facing US decision makers: *“Delays in disarming North Korea’s nuclear weapons provide its leaders time to increase their stockpile. It is time for the six-party talks to produce tangible results. If not, the United States need to apply just enough stick to convince North Korean leaders that the carrots being offered are more palatable than the sledgehammer. Presented with the examples of Libya or Iraq, which policy option would North Korea prefer? Is this a valid comparison or are the strategic situations radically different? Should coercion fail, the United States must be ready to follow through on its thread of military action to disarm North Korea of its nuclear weapons completely”*. This is an accurate assessment of US policy as seen outside – and one which shows that the US is being forced into a corner. The denuclearization of North Korea is becoming a primary metric of the success of an American administration. In the following, we argue why this is a very dangerous corner to be driving into.

3.4 PRC Interests in the DPRK/US Dispute

Chinese Pride in Their Role

³⁷ Levi, quoted in Cooper, M.H., “North Korean Crisis”. CQ Researcher, April 2003.

The People's Republic of China is today the main rival of the US for the role of dominant superpower. North Korea is a friendly neighbor - a protégé - to the PRC which would not tolerate North Korean

- military defeat by the West,
- invasion by the South or
- conversion to a west-friendly state like Taiwan.

In the 1950s, the PRC went to war against the US and the UN, losing perhaps well over a hundred thousand men to prevent North Korea from being occupied or even defeated in war. From looking at a map and considering history, it should be quite clear that the DPRK regime cannot survive without PRC endorsement and assistance. Equally, one might conclude that they are not going to develop nuclear programs without explicit PRC approval.

In the Korean War China suffered between 170,000 and 900,000 casualties³⁸. Yet this war, unlike the later war with Vietnam, is still honored in extensive museum displays in Beijing as a proud part of Chinese history - in a nation where the government of the day decides which precise parts of their history are allowable in public. Relations with the North are treasured in no uncertain terms. Contemporary Chinese Communist Party writers express the hope that "*China's travails and achievements will be recorded in history*"³⁹ in the context of the DPRK's disputes with the US.

The Pedigree of North Korean Weapons

The pedigree of the DPRK's "Nodong" and "Taepodong" missiles is unclear. Their origins may be in Soviet "SCUD" missiles of the 1960s, but collaborations and exchanges with Egypt, Syria, Iran, Pakistan and the PRC leave the precise technological origins impossible to determine. However, there is enough evidence to prove that China has been intimately involved with the North Korean missile program, at least until 1997⁴⁰. Nevertheless, it is pretty transparent to even those without degrees in rocket science, that the Shahab (Iranian), Ghauri (Pakistani) and Taepodong (DPRK) share similar antecedents, if not being completely identical.

A similar cloud of uncertainty hangs over the North Korean nuclear program. There is strong evidence that the designs for nuclear weapons, if not the weapons themselves, provided to Pakistan in the late 1980s/ early 90s came from the PRC⁴¹. Recently, Libya has stated that the nuclear technology it received came from China, with Pakistan being a middleman, facilitating training and transportation (BFR). The Libyans also provided incontrovertible proof of PRC designs for nuclear weapons provided by the Pakistanis, with blueprints in

³⁸ Kortegaard, B.L., "Counter-Attack, Stalemate, The Outpost War" Estimates over 62,000 Americans and around 283,000 Korean and other UN dead or MIA; .American estimates of enemy casualties, including prisoners, exceed 1,500,000, of which 900,000, almost two-thirds, were Chinese." Yue, Dongxiao, "Korean War FAQ", cited by Kortegaard, says that 170,600 Chinese soldiers were killed or MIA. Each side assumes that most of their MIA were murdered by the other side.
<http://www.rt66.com/~korteng/SmallArms/TimeLine.htm>.

³⁹ Benjian, Xin, "Why Is China Spending So Much Effort To Promote The Six-Party Talks" Communist Youth League-run China Youth Daily (Zhongguo Qingnianbao) (6/23). Quoted in news excerpts from Media Reaction reporting, June 29, 2004.

⁴⁰ Monterrey Institute of International Studies, "CNS Resources on North Korea's Ballistic Missile Program".
<http://cns.miis.edu/research/korea/chr9698.htm> China and DPRK both strongly denied accusations that they were the origins of the "Silkworm" missiles which reached Iran in the 1980s. In Nov. 1997, a 100-strong team of Chinese and DPRK technicians was reported in Iran to assist with the development of missile production capabilities

⁴¹ Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, NRDC Nuclear Notebook, Vol. 59, No.2, pp. 74-77, March/April 2003.
"Pakistan's nuclear weapons are based on a Chinese implosion design that uses a core of highly enriched uranium".

Chinese⁴². Thus the idea of the PRC providing weapons of mass destruction to unstable neighbors is not new – and their historical commitment to the DPRK far exceeds any shown to the Pakistanis, Iranians or Libyans. Shipments of nuclear technology (uranium-enrichment centrifuges) are reported to have been flown over Chinese territory from Pakistan to DPRK⁴³ – presumably with the full knowledge of the PRC. Thus it appears more than likely that the PRC approved of, if not supplied, nuclear technology and weapons to North Korea. Given the criss-cross mode of technology transfers seen in the missile program, it is unrealistic to expect proof of a clear, direct transfer from PRC to DPRK. Circumstantial inference and common sense must be used to decide that the North Korean nuclear weapon program did not develop without continuous approval from the PRC. The recent denial of the Chinese Foreign Minister that there is any evidence of North Korean uranium enrichment is typical of the merry dance that the PRC has been leading US negotiators⁴³.

In addition, the PRC recently disagreed (effectively guaranteeing a veto if pursued) with US efforts to generate UNSC action against Iran's nuclear program⁴⁴ – a move guaranteed to raise the PRC's stock in the Islamic world. The Chinese move, reiterating the primacy of the IAEA, in fact appears to have defused the Iranian crisis, with the Iranian government moving away from its earlier directions. It would again be unrealistic to expect that this implies a cessation of either the PRC-assisted Iranian missile program or the nuclear weapon ambitions of Teheran.

Given the above, we take strong issue with the assumption seen commonly in American discussions on the DPRK. This assumption is that North Korea's larger neighbors are worried about the emergence of a nuclear capability there – to the extent that their interests in dealing with DPRK are aligned with US interests.

It is clear that the PRC calibrates the responses of the DPRK. In mid-2002, the DPRK suddenly announced that it was exiting the NPT and developing nuclear weapons. Why then? One theory⁴⁵, argued using interpretations of news reports of Pakistani official actions, and considerations of the strategic imperatives of the US and PRC governments, is that the weapons which suddenly appeared in the DPRK arsenal were Chinese weapons removed from Pakistan as a US-PRC solution to defuse the India-Pakistan standoff in June 2002. Note that the North Korea crisis suddenly boiled over in October 2002 with the DPRK announcement of weapon capability to a visiting US delegation. The timing of this action is certainly plausible under this theory.

⁴² NTI, "Libya Profile: Nuclear Overview", citing IAEA reports.

http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Libya/3939_3940.html Excerpt: "Apparently the design documents produced by Libya were transferred from Pakistan and contained information in both Chinese and English, establishing their Chinese lineage."

⁴³ Marquand, R., Kirk, D., "Ranks breaking over North Korea" Christian Science Monitor, June 22, 2004 edition.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0622/p01s04-woap.htm> "Last month China's deputy foreign minister suggested for the first time that Beijing had no convincing evidence that North Korea had or is pursuing the uranium program that sparked the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula."

⁴⁴ Anon, "China Opposes Iran UNSC Referral". Daily Times, Lahore, Pakistan, July 11, 2004.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_7-11-2004_pg1_2 Excerpt: "Li said, contradicting Washington by saying "the Iranian government is having a very positive attitude in its cooperation" with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)."

⁴⁵ Komerath, N., "Has Pakistan Lost Its Nuclear Weapons?" Bharat-Rakshak Monitor, September 2002.

<http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/MONITOR/ISSUE5-1/narayanan.html>

Whether or not the weapons are identical to those that were in Pakistan, the above considerations tell us that military attempts to remove the nuclear weapons, or to destroy nuclear facilities in DPRK are doomed to failure. The PRC will probably detect the attack, and will have removed the weapons to safe storage. More importantly, they will simply bring them back to DPRK after the Americans leave. Will this provide DPRK with a second-strike capability? This issue bears some thought, because it is hard to see where such a second strike can be launched without triggering a Sino-US nuclear war. Hence we submit that the danger is more in the public humiliation for the US of failing to remove North Korean nuclear capability despite going to war. Pakistan's Generals viewed Afghanistan as their "strategic depth", to protect their nuclear deterrent from Indian/ Israeli attack, but here the analogy is not accurate – the PRC is the more powerful nation, well known to be a nuclear weapon state.

Present PRC interests

Reports in official PRC media speak of their pride in having set up the "6-party" negotiations involving DPRK, USA, ROK, Japan, Russia and the PRC. The PRC's role is as the "host" and the "mediator" – as befits a "Big Nation"³⁹. This is a far cry from the 1950s, when the PRC, newly formed after a bitter civil war and a terrible war of Japanese occupation, became the villain of the world, attacked by the United Nations, condemned as aggressor, and forced to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of its soldiers to protect an ally. The UN did not admit the PRC then – Taiwan was the recognized "China".

Today, the PRC enjoys having its proxy DPRK negotiate as an equal with the US, while the hated rivals Japan and Russia watch in deep concern, and the South Koreans are prevented from assuming a leading role in a discussion centering on their safety.

The PRC's pragmatic interests in the 6-party negotiations include those of keeping Japan and Russia out of Korea, denying them excessive influence or markets. As seen from ROK opinion, PRC benefits from continued US hostility towards DPRK, since this helps alienate ROK citizens and weakens the US-ROK alliance. The PRC itself has no visible intention of getting into another war, but may not mind having its proxy keep the pot stirred, just below ignition point, as the negotiations drag on indefinitely on a predictable 4-year US Presidential Election cycle.

As the crisis continues, the PRC becomes ever more indispensable and central as the host and mediator, the voice of reason to whom the world looks up as the best hope to control both its unpredictable neighbor and an America whom they view as impetuous. Meanwhile, it is becoming quite obvious that the PRC-DPRK relationship is much more an attorney-client relationship than a superpower's relations with a rogue neighbor.

PRC Strategic Opportunities in DPRK/US Dispute

There is a large potential strategic opportunity for the PRC in inducing the US into military action against the DPRK. The technological wizardry of "Shock and Awe"⁴⁶ is no longer likely to win praise in the world, after the Iraq experience, so even a best-case military victory for the US at zero cost in US casualties, would win little for the US in world opinion. On the other hand, combat against the DPRK will probably trigger attacks on the ROK, and an

⁴⁶ At the beginning of the US military action against the Iraqi regime in 2003, the US Department of Defense advertised the massive bombardment of Iraqi targets as being calculated to induce "shock and awe" and precipitate early surrender and an end to hostilities.

immediate and immense disruption of the world economy, given ROK's role as a world-class manufacturer. In addition, the DPRK has openly threatened that "*If the U.S. ignites a nuclear war, the U.S. military bases in Japan would serve as a detonating fuse to turn Japan into a nuclear sea of fire*"⁴⁷ Should this unthinkable event occur, Heaven forbid, it would again benefit PRC in economic competition as demand for its manufacturing services rises due to disruptions of Korean and Japanese industrial output.

Action in DPRK will draw a commitment of forces from the US. As Orcutt indicates, these will necessarily include those drawn from overstretched resources in the Mid-East and the Indian Ocean. Assuming that the US destroys the DPRK regime, the US will be committed in DPRK for an extended period – as long as the PRC chooses to sustain insurgencies and guerrilla war there. Expanding asymmetric warfare in Korea would potentially force the US to withdraw from Iraq and perhaps Afghanistan – the PRC is capable of increasing pressures in both places using suitable proxies. This would be a major blow to US strategic interests in the Islamic world, from East Asia to West Asia. The PRC will use this fact either in action, or as a bargaining chip for major concessions - perhaps abandonment of Taiwan, or other territorial gains.

Destruction or forced removal of DPRK nuclear weapons and capabilities will have to be done in US unilateral action, since the PRC will veto any move for UNSC approval for such action. Further, since the US cannot be sure of the locations of all weapons, and must pre-empt retaliation, any such attack would have to be much broader in scope than just a precision-weapon or special forces strike on nuclear facilities. Broad-ranging destruction and civilian casualties may be expected. Absent UN approval, the US action would be considered to be illegal aggression, although the doctrine on pre-emption may ultimately carry the day. Arguments about the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or the Missile Technology Control Regime hold no water in most parts of the world, as people observe the contradictions in US policy. In their view, it will be a case of the mighty US, armed with over 10,000 nuclear warheads, bullying tiny, starving North Korea, with its 8 or 10 nuclear weapons, while the highest levels of the US government continue to embrace the Pakistani military dictatorship – the worst-ever proliferators of weapons of mass destruction to the most dangerous regimes in the world.

Instead of reacting militarily, the PRC could simply wait until the US leaves, and then replenish DPRK's nuclear weapons. There is no way to effectively monitor, much less seal, the wild territory of the land border between DPRK and PRC. Thus, the most likely outcome of US military action is that a massive tactical victory for the US would turn into a huge strategic victory for the PRC, while North Korea turns even more desperate and hostile as a nuclear-armed nation. In the eyes of much of the world, it would even be seen as a moral victory for the PRC. Should the US then decide to stay in North Korea and enforce the "peace", the PRC may be expected to fund and support at least a punishing asymmetric war, if not direct intervention. The US experience in Afghanistan, with rebels coming in from Pakistan even though the US essentially controls Pakistan, should provide a small, scaleable model for what will happen, should the PRC put its vast resources to use.

4. Policy Concept: New Dawn for Korea

⁴⁷ "NK Threatens To Turn Japan Into 'Sea of Fire'" The Korea Times, September 23, 2004.
<http://times.hankooki.com/lpage/200409/kt2004092322373612070.htm>

Over 50 years after the start of a bitter Korean War, the people in the South are willing to consider re-unification with the North, on their terms, and they are in a position to dictate terms. In principle, reunification of Korea is no more technically complex than reunification and integration of West and East Germany – but it must be remembered that the Germans never actually went to war with each other. Meanwhile, consideration of the interests of DPRK's immediate neighbors shows that none actually shares the US' level of interest in enforcing the NPT on DPRK. The neighbors have much broader and diverse interests. We also see that the people in the ROK are at once grateful for, and resent, the American military presence. They do view American statements about North Korea as counter-productive⁴⁸.

We present the concept of a new US policy towards DPRK. The thrust of the new policy would be a bold initiative to support the reunification of Korea, while circumventing and nullifying the nuclear blackmail by the DPRK/PRC. Five crucial elements are:

1. Protect ROK and Japan.
2. End DPRK/PRC nuclear blackmail.
3. Render DPRK nukes irrelevant and a liability.
4. Reduce PRC influence in Korea
5. Withdraw US forces from Korea.

Incidental interests in the above are to enhance US/Korea trade, and enhance US prestige in the world

4.1. Protect ROK and Japan: Security Guarantees

Japan is understandably concerned that a nuclear-armed DPRK will threaten, and possibly attack, US bases in Japan. The threat of attack is not confined to nuclear weapons – DPRK's large array and evident skills with conventional missiles poses a grave threat to all of Japan, and has prompted Japanese moves to put spy satellites over DPRK and invest in theater missile defense. The ROK is concerned that withdrawal of US forces from the border would open the way for the DPRK to invade, or that continued militarization of North Korea will lead to war in the peninsula if the US intervenes militarily. These concerns must be addressed in any US policy. Thus a firm assurance of US commitment to the security of both Japan and ROK is essential. This is especially critical today as the US proceeds with force reductions in both Japan and ROK under the new military doctrine of force projection from the CONUS rather than permanent foreign bases. This assurance must take the form of more than a "nuclear umbrella, since the bigger concern may be about conventional missiles

4.2. Render DPRK nukes irrelevant and a liability: Doctrine of Source Responsibility

There is common agreement that a direct missile attack from the DPRK on the US would be certain suicide, and is far less likely than other terrorist attacks. With the security guarantees above, the likelihood of direct attacks on ROK and Japan also diminish. The danger of smuggled weapons being used by terrorists is much higher. This suggests a new doctrine: *That any explosion or threat of use of a nuclear weapon or fissile material against*

⁴⁸ CNS: "Letter asks Bush to maintain stance against invading N. Korea". Januar 21, 2005. http://www.the-tidings.com/2005/0121/korea_text.htm Excerpt: "In a Jan. 10 letter to Bush, 117 people --- including Cardinal Stephen Kim Sou-hwan, retired archbishop of Seoul --- said that to successfully convince North Korea to halt its nuclear weapons program, the United States should first give formal assurance that North Korea's security will be guaranteed."

any nation, where the weapon or fissile material was traced back to the DPRK, would be grounds for the use of US nuclear weapons in retaliation against DPRK. The DPRK is thus held completely responsible for the safety and security of all fissile materials unless it returns to the Non Proliferation Treaty and full inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

This declaration has dangers in that someone may fake North Korean signatures on weapons, but this determination may be left to military and scientific personnel. This unilateral declaration by the US is consistent with the opinion delivered by the International Court of Justice⁴⁹. There is no possibility of this being endorsed by any resolution in the UN Security Council due to the certainty of a PRC veto – and there is no benefit to forcing such a PRC veto of the idea. Our estimate is that there will be no more reactions than the usual posturing in the media from the PRC.

In this scenario, the DPRK nuclear weapons and fissile material programs become liabilities for both the DPRK and the PRC. It has been pointed out that credible retaliation does not always render deterrence irrelevant. However, the key here is to remove any credible fear in DPRK that the US is about to attack. This fear cannot be removed in an environment where the US is exerting extreme and visible pressure every day, and is intensely engaged at the highest level in analyzing every move made by the DPRK leadership or military. The point is that instead of having to maintain a deterrent against an ever-looming US threat, the DPRK leadership must face the reality that their only danger is in possessing such a “deterrent” which may get used somewhere under circumstances beyond their immediate control.

The teeth in this doctrine are provided by willingness to use US and allied naval and air power – in a setting where the US holds the advantage. There have been several high-seas chases etc. involving US, Spanish and other navies against ships believed to be carrying North Korean weapon components. In this respect, Israel, Australia, Japan and India might be counted as allies, since the cessation of the missile/nuke trade with the Islamist nations is in the interest of all these nations. India has in the past intercepted (from a DPRK ship docked at an Indian port) a missile component shipment from DPRK to Pakistan, and Israel has intercepted a Pakistani shipment to Libya. High-seas interception might be taken to be an act of war – however, as pointed out in our discussions on this aspect, it is war only if the DPRK calls it war. The far more likely scenario is that the sinking of a contraband ship carrying weapons of mass destruction would be denied, given US naval superiority. Should this provoke hostile reactions from the DPRK, the US response will probably be to destroy the DPRK’s fleet. Note that such options are considered in the Proliferation Security Initiative, and that the PRC opposes PSI precisely because of such implications⁵⁰.

4.3. Return to Bilateral Negotiations – Between the ROK and DPRK

⁴⁹ International Court of Justice. “Legality Of The Threat Or Use Of Nuclear Weapons”. Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996. <http://www.icj-cij.org/icjwww/idecisions/isummaries/iunanaummary960708.htm>

⁵⁰ Wei, Su, “China’s Views on PSI” Issues & Insights Volume 04-05 Countering the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Role of the Proliferation Security Initiative. http://www.csis.org/pacfor/issues/v04n05_ch2.cfm
Excerpt: *“But every coin has two sides. From a less positive side, like most members of the international community, China has concerns over the lawfulness and the political implications of some measures envisaged in the PSI, especially those measures apparently in violation of generally recognized rules of international law. For example, the interception on the high seas of carriers suspected of conducting illegal trade in WMD would be in contravention of one of the freedoms of high seas, i.e., the freedom of navigation.”*

An alternative to direct US negotiation with DPRK is to heavily back ROK as the only negotiating authority with the DPRK. In other words, both Japan and the US should withdraw from direct talks with the DPRK on nuclear/security issues. This step would end the PRC's role as "host" and "mediator", since the PRC would otherwise have to accord to the ROK the role it now accords to the US – an unlikely scenario. It will end the joint DPRK/PRC blackmail of the US. It will put both "proxies" – DPRK and ROK – on an equal footing, and remove the PRC's advantage. Most importantly, it will put the ROK in a very strong position – crucial to the success of the overall policy. Thus, the US would insist that all future aid to the DPRK, whether from ROK or US or Japan, go through ROK.

One possible PRC reaction to this would be to perceive the advantages of a swift conclusion of the multilateral talks (or talks with the Russians and DPRK) with an announcement of success in de-nuclearizing DPRK. The US should simply accept this outcome as being in line with its strategic interests, whoever takes credit for it.

4.4. Announce a Roadmap to Re-Unification

The President might consider announcing the dream, and an ambitious timetable for, Korean Reunification. Along with this would come an ROK-led Far Eastern equivalent of the Marshall Plan for DPRK's reconstruction⁵¹. This would be funded by Japan, US and ROK, but again would be directed through and managed by ROK. An ROK/DPRK Free Trade Zone would be created and expanded. ROK might grant 100,000 visas for expatriate workers from DPRK to work in ROK industry. Provided security concerns are addressed, these would form the vanguard of a movement to raise standards of living, and awareness of democratic freedoms, in DPRK. In turn, this movement is expected to help open people-to-people contacts into DPRK – a necessary condition to induce internal movements for regime change in DPRK. In time, the Demilitarized Zone would be turned into an extensive Free Trade Zone.

It has been pointed out that the DPRK is a garrison state, where the military is deeply indoctrinated and enjoys a standard of living well beyond that of the civilian population. Demilitarizing poses its problems, similar to what might happen in Pakistan if the military faces loss of power. Solutions to this would have to be worked out as reunification begins – and here, "buy-in" from the PRC is the probable key, since the military will not dare oppose Chinese imperatives.

4.5 Withdraw US Forces from Korea

This is in line with present US intentions, and would simply enable such a withdrawal to be cast as victory in bringing peace with freedom to the Korean peninsula – the successful conclusion of more than half a decade of commitment. Such a withdrawal is in line with new military doctrine of using very few forward bases equipped with emergency supplies, coupled with a global reach and precision strike capability using massive airlift resources, precision airdrop of forces, V/STOL aircraft and weapons, including hypersonic weapon platforms capable of hitting targets on the other side of the world within hours of the start of a conflict.

⁵¹ After a recent visit to North Korea, Science writer Richard Stone points out the "quiet eagerness" with which DPRK scientists approach Western collaboration suggesting this as one possible avenue for DPRK exposure to the West. While the North Koreans are enthusiastic about finding technical solutions to their food and energy shortage, he also notes a North Korean tendency to favor solutions "too much, too fast, [with] and emphasis on high-tech solutions rather than basic management, and an underestimation for the resources needed to initiate the project." See Stone, R. "A Wary Pas de Deux," *Science* (305), 1696 **2004**.

The implications of the above are

- The United States takes the high road.
- The PRC must either go along with this or lose in strategic interests.
- The DPRK values reunification more than it values the PRC.
- The ROK values reunification more than it values the US and hence the policy will enable alignment of ROK leadership with both the US and with popular opinion simultaneously.
- The US/UN will have to continue to guarantee that there is no forced takeover of either ROK or DPRK by the other entity during the reunification process.
- Regime change is achieved through gradual economic revolution rather than political or military force.

4.5 Post Re-Unification: Implications

A nuclear-armed, united Korea is not likely to be a pleasant prospect for the PRC, but is not at all inconsistent with the interests of the US. What the PRC can do about it is to ensure that the PRC technology and weaponry are removed from DPRK before the unification – and demand that ROK stay non-nuclear. Withdrawal of US forces from Korea will be a plus for the PRC in this context.

A united Korea has the potential to be an “economic tiger”; however, in the short term, the south will have to pour resources into the north to bring up the standard of living and the infrastructure⁵². The transition to a free economy in the north is unpredictable^{52,30}.

A united Korea (not nuclear-armed) is in the interests of the PRC – it will provide excellent opportunities for trade. The ROK will probably establish an excellent trading relationship with the PRC, while maintaining its present relations with the US.

A united Korea will pose economic competition to Japan. Potentially, the stand-down of forces along the DMZ should result in a peace dividend for ROK. For the near term, cheap labor will be available from the north, as standards of living come up. These may provide important advantages to Korea in competing with Japan.

These are implications, should reunification actually occur. Most observers consider this to be unlikely in the short term – but a policy consistent with a drive toward reunification should suffice to defuse the nuclear crisis.

5. Discussion

The centerpiece of past US policy towards the DPRK has been an unbending insistence that the DPRK move towards denuclearization. This is a consequence of the near-religious adherence to the objectives of the NPT – a regime that is viewed as basically discriminatory and hypocritical by much of the world. Today, with revelations of Pakistan and the PRC proliferating nuclear technology with impunity, the NPT is completely discredited. The PRC has taken the lead in rendering it irrelevant. Uncritical adherence to the NPT’s goals has

⁵² Mack, L., summarizing lecture by Noland, M., “Famine and Reform in North Korea”. Modern Asia Series, Harvard University Asia Center, November 7, 2003. Noland estimates that 600,000 to 1 million North Koreans have died of famine after agriculture and industry collapsed, as Soviet aid stopped in 1985 and Chinese food aid stopped in 1994. He dispels notions that the North Korean economy can grow rapidly under a free market economy, likening it to the Romanian or Belorussian low-productivity agricultural economies. He postulates that regime change is a pre-requisite to economic revival.

proved to be a weakness for the US – and this has been exploited by the PRC to push the US along a predictable escalation path, into a corner. Moving further along this path would force the US into a conflict that no one wants – but the PRC would probably not mind seeing because it creates a win-win situation for PRC geopolitical objectives.

Orcutt¹¹ says that the US, ROK, Japan, PRC and Russia agree on the three central “NO”s – NO War, NO Nukes, No Economic Collapse of DPRK. We would add a fourth constraint on the US: NO collapse of the ROK/US alliance.

Again, in our view, the problem is that these four “Nos” are well-known constraints on US policy, and form a pyramidal cage. It is useful to consider the US assumptions on the “force balance” that keeps this pyramid in equilibrium, with all the national players inside:

Vertex A: No DPRK Nukes

The US, Japan and ROK are emphatic that DPRK should not have nukes –and exert tremendous pressure to push this vertex in. The DPRK tries its best to break out, and one of the pressures on it is that the US has a huge nuclear arsenal, much of it within reach of Pyongyang; ROK is known to have at least started uranium enrichment, and Japan is the world’s largest repository of enriched uranium from nuclear power reactors. Russia and PRC, both nuclear powers, remain ambivalent on this issue, though most US thinking appears to assume that both support US objectives rather than DPRK objectives in this.

Vertex B: No Collapse

As seen above, no one wants the DPRK to collapse economically. The ROK fears a refugee flood, the trauma of their relatives dying of starvation, and the resulting civil upheaval in the ROK. They also fear a desperate regime or irregulars starting a war. The PRC does not want a long-time client to collapse, and does not wish to be burdened with a refugee flood. Neither does Russia. Japan fears refugees to a lesser extent, but again fears the actions of an irrational regime in its death throes. Humanitarian considerations aside, the US mainly fears the consequences of North Korean weaponry falling into those who would use them against US interests.

So in this respect, all the external nations support this vertex. The DPRK may be pushing out on this to keep the threat alive, because it brings more support from the others. Of course it may not have any choice.

Vertex C: No War

Briefly, it is our contention that Japan and ROK fear war far more than the PRC or Russia. The US is ambivalent, and the DPRK may be irrational. Do the PRC and Russia really help in pushing against the chances of war? We believe that today’s Russia does not want war. We submit that the PRC believes it can avoid the ill consequences of a war, but is not necessarily worried by the prospect, and in fact may be pushing alternately from both sides of this vertex. Russia today would certainly be opposed to a decisive war where either the DPRK or the ROK collapses. The former would mean a tremendous rise of US/ Japanese power in the region. The latter would mean Chinese hegemony. Russia would lose in either event.

Vertex D: No collapse of the US-ROK alliance

In this, the US and part of the ROK(as seen from the works we cited), and to a lesser extent Japan, are on one side – pushing in on the vertex. The PRC, Russia and DPRK are very much on the other side. It may be that there is growing support, or at least the potential thereof, in the ROK for breaking the US-ROK alliance, and the other parties may find this to their advantage. If a situation occurs where ROK support is split down the middle, the US

may find itself suddenly at a large disadvantage. This is where creative uses of the “No War” constraint may be to the strategic advantage of the PRC, and Russia may be ambivalent about it.

PRC reaction to the creation and expansion of free trade zones is unpredictable. Efforts to create such an economic zone on the PRC-DPRK border⁵³ ended with the chief developer sent to prison for 18 years on tax evasion charges⁵⁴ – generally a sign that the PRC leadership wanted him out.

There are some other indicators that the nuclear scare is being deliberately engineered by the DPRK. Direct evidence of weapons-grade fissile material refinement by DPRK does not exist in the open literature. Circumstantial evidence abounds – but much of the estimation of the number of weapons developed by DPRK assumes that every stoppage of their power reactors is for the purpose of removing and reprocessing fuel rods to extract plutonium. This assumption appears to be driven by the problem of explaining how DPRK could have developed a certain number of weapons, and looks suspiciously like a circular argument – DPRK claims to have 8 or 9 nuclear weapons, and the only way to explain that is to assume full extraction of plutonium from reprocessed fuel rods. Hence the shutdowns of even the 1958-vintage research reactor are assumed to be for reprocessing and plutonium extraction.

⁵³ Schumann, M., Sinuiju, “The Hermit Kingdom's Bizarre SAR: Having failed to build a communist utopia, North Korea plans to create a capitalist one with its own elected officials and a wall to keep out the riffraff. Kim Jong Il, North Korea's enigmatic dictator, intends to turn Sinuiju into a special economic zone... The government plans to deport Li, his factory, and the 500,000 residents of Sinuiju to other parts of the communist country to make way for a capitalist paradise as ambitious as it is bizarre. Li and his neighbors will be replaced by 200,000 model workers, hand-picked for their technical skills, who will populate a city encircled by a yet-to-be-built wall erected to keep illegal migrants out. Within the city limits, a kind of anti-North Korea with its own laws and elected officials will be created from scratch. Private enterprise, not state socialism, will guide the economy. A legal code enforced by imported European judges, not Kim's fiat, will regulate the community. The tightly controlled border crossing at Sinuiju will be thrown open to Chinese labor and business which Yang's appointment is meant to entice. China offers not just investment capital. The country and its rising class of entrepreneurs can conceivably teach North Korea how to turn a crumbling communist state into an economic dynamo. After all, Beijing two decades ago launched free-trade zones to lure foreign investment as a prelude to transforming the whole country into a market economy.” TIME ASIA, <http://www.time.com/time/asia/magazine/printout/0,13675,501021007-356131,00.html>

⁵⁴ Stanton, Joshua, “Opening Up North Korea? Dream On.” “Advocates of normalizing trade with North Korea tell us that if we'd only open the free trade floodgates, we could sit back and watch the Internet spread its liberating tentacles from Kungang to Sinuiju, and eventually even to the gates of the gulags themselves. It's not a new idea, however. Advocates of this view have been always forgotten about that other set of floodgates--the ones with Kim Jong Il's hand firmly on the valve--to their financial peril... Hyundai Asan, which ran the Kungang tour business, ended up losing millions paying outrageously high commissions to the North Koreans, who (oddly enough) turned out to be just as cutthroat in their business negotiations as in their diplomacy (which is an oxymoron in the North Korean context). After the initial excitement and novelty of Kungang died down, South Korean consumers returned to their toughminded ways and balked at the exorbitant prices, and the business began bleeding money. In financial desperation, Hyundai Asan suggested building a gambling casino, but neither the South Korean government nor any private investor would dump more cash into the failing enterprise. The company president eventually flung himself from a 12th-story office window. ... the Sinuiju Industrial Park, the brainchild of a Chinese-Dutch impresario named Yang Bin. This, too, was to be sealed off from the rest of North Korea and staffed by a few unquestionably loyal, handpicked workers. In fact, North Korea intended to empty out the entire population of 500,000 to make room for them. Mr. Yang forgot to ask China what it thought of the idea, however; it turns out, China didn't exactly approve of the idea of North Korea breaking free of its economic dependence on Beijing. The Chinese government promptly arrested Mr. Yang for tax evasion (he got 18 years) and the Sinuiju project, too, was forgotten. *OneFreeKorea.com* June 30, 2004

The regime appears to cater to this. An IAEA official has reported seeing hundreds of technicians wearing lead aprons racing towards a reactor (but not actually pulling out or handling radioactive rods), and promptly concluded that he had seen the brutal regime sacrifice the lives of so many of its citizens. Apparently he has not wondered why he was permitted to be a witness to this strange scene. The sudden and expanding claims of the DPRK about weapon possession can be explained much easier by remembering that the PRC could have supplied – or loaned- them.

The relationship between the PRC and DPRK resembles an attorney-client relationship more than that between a responsible “Big Nation” and a struggling small nation or a rogue neighbor ruled by irrational thugs. Thus, the PRC attempts to put the best face on DPRK actions, even as it claims Big Nation status for hosting the 6-party talks.

There are encouraging signs that the new US Administration has seen through this game. In December 2004, Mitchell Reiss, director of policy planning at the US State Department, speaking in Seoul, laid out⁵⁵ *“a common vision for a Korea that is whole, free and at peace”*. Further, he said: *“North Korea really does have a choice.... It can try to cling to its nuclear weapons programs and old ways of doing business, or it can seize the historic opportunity we are offering it to transform its relations with the outside world and set itself onto a new -- and more beneficial -- course.”* The term “whole” as applied to Korean future stands out, especially when taken with the “historic opportunity” for DPRK.

Sentiment for reunification is deeply embedded in the Korean psyche, as seen from discussions with Koreans of various age groups. In recent years, at least among the younger, more affluent generation, it appears that this sentiment may have overcome the concerns about North Korean invasion to a large extent. It is essential that the US take note of this sentiment, and ensure policies compatible with this rising sentiment. The change of direction for which we argue, would align the US with this sentiment, while being cognizant of the security threats posed by the DPRK’s unpredictable regime.

6. Summary

We draw attention to the interests of the PRC in the current Korean crisis – and point out that continued or escalated US hostility towards DPRK is in the strategic interests of the PRC, and provides the PRC with significant strategic opportunities. The present path is fraught with danger for the US, and may lead to a situation where US strategic interests are defeated in all of Asia and the Middle East, leaving the PRC as the dominant superpower in both military might and popular perception. We conceptualize a policy where the US takes the high road. This policy, it appears, has a good chance of achieving all the aims of the US regarding the Korean peninsula:

- Peace and stability in the Korean peninsula
- Protection of our South Korean allies
- Protection of our Japanese allies
- Stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons from Korea.

About the authors:

⁵⁵ Reiss, M., [United States, Republic of Korea Share a Common Vision](http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/hyper/2004/1203/epf503.htm)
<http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/hyper/2004/1203/epf503.htm>

Narayanan Komerath is a Senior Nunn Security Fellow at the Center for International Security of the School of International Affairs, and Professor of Aerospace Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, USA. Jose Gonzalez is a Pre-Doctoral Fellow at the Center, and is pursuing a PhD in the School of Chemistry at Georgia Institute of Technology. The views expressed here are of the authors.