INTRODUCTION

As South Koreans watched the former Soviet Union disintegrate and East European communism collapse in the early 1990s, they were full of expectations that Korean unification would soon be realized. The anticipated collapse of North Korea and the unification of the Korean peninsula have yet to materialize.

Instead, North Korea has turned out to be too resilient to collapse. This phenomenon can be explained by the peculiar circumstances of North Korea and the unique situation on the Korean peninsula. But North Korea’s capability as a state has shown steady decline, and unless Pyongyang manages to stave off collapse, Korean unification will continue to remain a clear possibility. Inducing unification, then, will hinge on policy and strategic measures.

A variety of issues will arise in the course of unification involving political, diplomatic, military, economic, social and cultural consequences. Although a majority of South Koreans see unification as an economic problem, it will be an even more serious military problem. The Korean peninsula is subject to an acute danger of warfare. Military tension is higher here than almost anywhere else in the world. Therefore, the most pressing issue will involve eliminating this state of military confrontation and successfully controlling any con-
tingencies under manageable limits to reach a peaceful unification ultimately.

Therefore, much attention is paid to how unification will unfold. Unification itself will be the single, most shocking event to occur in the strategic environment of the Northeast Asian region in the 21st century. It will bring with it a range of issues that will pose new challenges for South Korea, the United States, China, Japan and Russia. These should be addressed in the process of unification. At this stage, nobody can tell for sure how long the unification tunnel will be or how dark it will become inside the tunnel.¹

Among the various scenarios for Korean unification, three have been widely discussed. The first is unification through a step-by-step process of reconciliation, cooperation and peaceful coexistence. This is the unification formula that South Korean government wants to implement. A second scenario involves unification by occupation following armed hostilities that have been initiated by the North. The third envisions unification by absorption, with the South assuming control after a collapse of the North, a scenario that is brought about by one of two secondary scenarios. The first posits the sudden collapse of the Kim Jong II regime as it fails to resolve economic difficulties in the North and then is toppled by a military coup or widespread turmoil. The second supposes a gradual deterioration of the Kim regime culminating in an ultimate collapse amidst a worsening economic crisis. In the event of the former, the Pyongyang regime may turn to China for help, or a coup or civil instability may escalate into Yugoslavia-style internal strife. Finally, it is also possible that national division may linger on without any tangible movement toward unification.

Inter-Korean military relations and unified Korea’s relations with major powers will be determined by which unification scenario actually takes place. If the two Koreas reach a stage of peaceful unification after a phased reconciliation leading to cooperation and peaceful coexistence, inter-Korean military relations will likewise be marked by reconciliation and cooperation, through such measures

¹Chung Min Lee and Jonathan D. Pollack, Korean Unification: Scenarios and Implications (Santa Monica, CA: RAND DRR-1722-A, 1998). This report is an excellent case to analyze full implications of Korean unification scenarios.
Going into the "Unification Tunnel": Strategic and Military Implications

As confidence building, personnel exchanges and greater transparency. Military capability could be maintained at much lower levels than now through phased bilateral disarmament. After peaceful unification, the maintenance of a military force capable of coping with regional threats would be adequate. Even in this event, however, North and South Korean forces will not be able to integrate on a one-to-one basis. As seen in the case of Yemen, the integration of military forces of previously divided countries on a one-to-one basis is problematic, as such integration harbors the seeds of future disputes.

If the second scenario takes place, in which North Korea wages war against the South but eventually loses to the South Korean and U.S. combined forces, military integration could be attained with the least potential for future conflict among the given three scenarios. However, this does not mean that unification under this scenario is desirable. The political, economic, social and cultural damage wrought by war can be so devastating that unification by war and the resulting absorption of North Korea’s military must be the least likely or most undesirable scenario.

The third scenario concerns the absorption of North Korean forces following the collapse of the Pyongyang regime. In this case, there arises the question of how and when North Korea’s military might be absorbed. Germany’s experience with integration provides a possible clue. However, application of the German case to Korea requires certain discretion due to differences in the state of military confrontation, experience, historical background and military strength as well as differences in the security policies of other countries in their respective regions.

In sum, the strategic and military implications of unification differ greatly depending on which unification scenario unfolds. Therefore, this paper will deal with each unification scenario separately to draw out the strategic and military implications of each selected scenario starting from unification through gradual integration, and then examining unification through armed conflict, and unification through absorption following North Korea’s internal collapse. The continuation of the status quo frequently referred to as “muddling through” will also be briefly mentioned to cover all possible cases.
UNIFICATION THROUGH PHASED INTEGRATION

South Korea’s strategic goal is to achieve unification through peaceful means. The United States fully supports this goal. Other major powers surrounding the Korean peninsula also support peaceful unification. Peaceful unification requires systemic convergence between the two Koreas, which is a long way from the current situation of military confrontation. The two different systems will have to be integrated with each other first in the economic, and later in the political and military realms. For the two systems to converge, a phased approach is required to elicit cooperation instead of confrontation. Significant among the components of this process is arms control.

In particular, North Korea’s numerical superiority in conventional forces and its weapons of mass destruction are the most serious security problems that must be tackled in order to ensure a smooth, gradual integration. As of 1998, North Korea maintains superiority over the South in terms of the quantitative strength of its armed forces with some 1.16 million troops, or 1.7 times the South’s 690,000. In major offensive weapons as well, the North dominates the South by approximately 2 to 1. North Korea has 1.7 times as many tanks as the South, twice as many artillery pieces, 1.3 times as many tactical fighters, and 1.3 times as many armored personnel carriers. In addition, in 1993 and 1994, when the North Korean nuclear question emerged as an international issue, North Korea deployed large numbers of improved 170mm self-propelled guns and 240mm multiple rocket launchers to forward positions close to the demarcation line. This was apparently meant to threaten South Korea’s security while calling for nuclear negotiations with the United States. The supremacy of the North’s offensive weaponry and the forward deployment of 60 to 70 percent of its arsenal, along with Pyongyang’s anticipated blitzkrieg warfare strategy, continue to pose a serious threat to the South.

North Korea’s military threat to the South also includes the North’s development of long-range missiles and its significant stockpiles of

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2Yong-Sup Han, “Unification and Inter-Korean Military Integration,” Korea Focus, Vol. 6, No. 5, (September/October 1998), pp. 34-45.
chemical and biological weapons. Pyongyang possesses SCUD-B and -C missiles with ranges of 300km to 500km, and has completed deployment of its 1,000km-range No Dong I missile. In fact, the North began in the early 1990s to develop the Taepo Dong I and II as long-range ballistic missiles, with ranges of 2,000–2,500km and 4,000–6,000km, respectively. The development of the Taepo Dong I is complete, while the Taepo Dong II is expected to be operational and deployed by 2000. The North’s steady development of long-range missiles seems intended not only for export to the Middle East, but also to ensure the security of the Pyongyang regime. North Korea’s nuclear and long-range missile development programs will continue to threaten both South Korea and the stability and peace of the region.

As the two Koreas approach unification, surrounding countries will be concerned about the presence of 1.8 million troops total on the peninsula. The sheer size of the post-unification combined armed forces would be so enormous that neighboring countries will not welcome Korean unification without appropriate arms reduction measures in place well ahead of the event. Even within a united Korea such a large force could be problematic. There is grave concern over how quickly North Korea’s huge military can be integrated into the South’s and whether retiring North Korean military officers can adapt to civilian life. Some analysts believe that it is probable that at least some unexpected incidents such as the development of local insurgencies or terrorist organizations will occur.

As long as North Korea maintains over one million troops and their surprise attack doctrine, South Korea’s security concerns will not be mitigated and unilateral reduction by the South Koreans prior to unification is unlikely. However, if North and South Korea are able to unify following some initial stages of eased military confrontation and peaceful coexistence, answers to these questions can be worked out step by step over time. If unification is achieved following stages of reconciliation, cooperation and peaceful coexistence, the number and extent of unanticipated problems that may arise will be much less than in the case of an abrupt collapse of the North, as the armed forces of the two Koreas will be able to gradually get accustomed to each other. Therefore, to identify what North and South Korea should do in military affairs under phased unification, it will be helpful to apply “backward mapping.”
For instance, assuming that unification will be achieved by 2005, then at least some form of reconciliation and cooperation should begin now, with a system of peaceful coexistence attained in the next three to five years. To promote reconciliation and cooperation in the military realm, there should be agreed-upon measures, including a direct hot line linking the military authorities of both sides to discuss military issues and emergency situations. Confidence-building measures should also be instituted. Arms reduction measures including pulling forward-deployed forces back to the rear area should be implemented.

One such channel for military talks is the North-South Joint Military Commission (JMC) that was created on the basis of the Agreement on the Composition and Operation of the North-South Joint Military Commission, which went into effect on May 7, 1992, but has since become a dead letter. The JMC should discuss and embody details of the non-aggression provision stipulated in the auxiliary agreement to the “North-South Accord on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation,” which the two Koreas concluded in February 1992.

Concrete issues that the JMC should address include ending direct military confrontation, renouncing the use of force against each other, and establishing practices of resolving bilateral disputes through peaceful means. In addition, the two sides should promote confidence building by mutually controlling the production, deployment and operation of each side’s military forces, while creating norms, procedures, systems and practices for phased disarmament, culminating in the introduction of a peace regime. In such a case, the role of the military in influencing North-South relations will decline in favor of the development of political and economic cooperation.

However, should inter-Korean military confrontation remain serious with North Korea rejecting North-South disarmament, the issue of full-fledged arms control will have to be handled through the ongoing Four Party talks. South Korea and the United States have already agreed to resolve arms control and confidence-building issues at the Four Party talks. North Korea will also be obliged to seek resolution of military issues at the Four Party talks once it finds it impossible to effect disarmament through direct talks with the United States.
Over the last fifty years, South Korea has achieved democratization while reducing the weight of its military in domestic politics and the economy. In the North, however, the military has played a pivotal role in maintaining tight control over the entire country. Moreover, in view of the fact that the North Korean military is known to have taken the initiative in perpetrating terrorist acts and threatening all-out attack against the South during the transitional periods, promoting phased arms control to bring the North Korean military under political control will be key to the realization of any gradual integration between the two Koreas.

Therefore, phased arms control is very critical to ensuring security and stability on the Korean peninsula in the process of a gradual integration. Other than conventional weapons and military manpower, North Korea’s weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are critical to the success of the gradual integration process between the two Koreas. As witnessed in the case of Perry’s visit to North Korea, the United States takes the lead to resolve the issue of North Korea’s WMD. The United States is cautiously optimistic about the prospects of North Korea’s concession on its WMD programs if the appropriate price were going to be paid to Pyongyang. Without resolving North Korea’s WMD problems first, it would be much harder to resolve the problem of North Korea’s conventional military problems given the current U.S. policies.

According to the South Korean government’s plan, promoting cooperation and exchange between the two Koreas beginning with the economic sector will be conducive to inducing North Korea to respond to South Korea’s request for conventional arms control later. That is why the South Korean government addresses confidence building and arms control in the Four Party talks while promoting economic cooperation with the North through the inter-Korean business-to-business contacts.

In the process of arms control on the peninsula, it is inevitable that the issue of U.S. troops be raised. As long as North Korea insists that the issue of U.S. troops should be addressed in the arms control talks, the issue of U.S. troops will not be exempted from the talks. A recent episode in Seoul involving the issue of changing the status of U.S. forces seemed to raise the issue prematurely. However, the issue itself should be raised in the process of arms control talks that may in-
volve the United States, and South and North Korea. Therefore, policymakers and experts should be prepared to address the issue in the context of overall security on the Korean peninsula. Yet, it is not certain whether the issue will be discussed in the Four Party talks because the United States seems to be reluctant to allow Chinese involvement in the issue of U.S. troops.

**UNIFICATION THROUGH ARMED CONFLICT**

Even while North Korea is experiencing desperate starvation and severe economic difficulties, North Korea’s military goal of achieving unification through violent methods shows no change. To that end, North Korea is adding WMD to its existing arsenal. Occasionally, the North threatens the South and the region with missile tests and military intrusions.

South Korea and the United States under the banner of their combined forces will ultimately defeat North Korea in the event of an armed attack. However, the consequences will be dire. Therefore, when there are warnings about limited or all-out attack, the primary objective of South Korea and the United States will be to deter the possibility of war to the maximum extent. However, should deterrence fail, South Korea’s objectives will be to limit the range of conflict to the local area in case of a limited attack, and to counterattack and drive out North Korean armed forces in case of an all-out attack according to the South Korean–U.S. predetermined combined war plans, finally achieving unification by force. In managing the war, it is important to separate the Kim Jong Il leadership from North Korean residents so as to punish only those responsible for North Korea’s initiation of war.

South Korea’s domestic policy will be to manage the early indicator and warning system from the beginning of the crisis in close consultation with the U.S. and Korean Combined Forces Command. Responsive measures will be taken only in consultation with the United States. South Korea may opt to enter crisis bargaining with North Korea in a face-to-face negotiation. Before the crisis, it is very important for South Korea and the United States to communicate with the North Korean leadership their solemn resolve that the two nations and the world would never tolerate any war initiation by the North. If a war breaks out, South Korea and the United States would
fight until they accomplish unification because a war criminal should not be allowed to escape retribution. In this case, the revitalization of the UN Command and multinational forces under the banner of the United Nations will become important to prevent North Korea’s ally from helping North Korea.

It is also important for the United States and South Korea to make it clear to China that China must not support a war initiated by the North. The South Korean Government would not be alone in persuading China not to support North Korea. By recounting the history of the Korean War of 1950 to the world, South Korea should mobilize legitimate support from the entire world to punish North Korea.

In regard to the combined operational plan between the United States and Korea, it is necessary to revise when and how to counterattack North Korean armed forces. Shortening the time from the attack to the counterattacking is crucial to deterring North Korea’s attack. If the defense budgets of the two nations are allowed to decrease over time, it would take more days to start counterattacking. This might give the wrong signal to North Koreans particularly when the North Koreans are likely to use military options against the South as a means to get out of a hopeless situation.

In an all-out attack, Japanese logistical support for U.S. forces would be very critical to implementing war plans to the maximum efficiency by taking advantage of the revised U.S.-Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation. However, Japanese support should be limited to logistical support inside and around Japan and should not consist of any entry into South Korean territory or its territorial sea so as not to provoke China in such a crisis.4

In combating the North Korean armed forces, it is also important for the United States and South Korea to come to terms as to how far they will pursue the North Koreans and who will take the lead in doing so. Concerning this matter, views that the United States should

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4In this connection, it is very interesting to observe Korean attitudes changing about Japanese support in time of a North Korean attack as shown in the recent public opinion poll conducted by RAND and the Joongang Ilbo in March 1999. See Norman D. Levin, The Shape of Korea’s Future: South Korean Attitudes Toward Unification and Long-Term Security Issues (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999).
not cross the present Military Demarcation Line do not make sense.\textsuperscript{5} Those views can potentially send wrong signals to North Korea.

Just as unilateral actions on the South Korean side are not acceptable to the United States in the case of a North Korean all-out attack, so U.S. actions to hasten to end the Korean War will not be acceptable to South Koreans. The two allies should show North Korea their resolve that a second Korean War initiated by North Korea should be punished with severe penalties—unification by force.

**UNIFICATION THROUGH ABSORPTION BY SOUTH KOREA\textsuperscript{6}**

Red lights on the impending North Korean collapse have been turned on since 1996. In 1996, the former Commander of U.S. armed forces in Korea warned that North Korea was entering the fourth stage and was ultimately approaching collapse.\textsuperscript{7} The former U.S. CIA Director also added that North Korea would collapse ultimately, leaving only the question as to when and how the North would collapse. The former South Korean President Kim Young Sam held the belief that the North probably would collapse during his term. On the whole, however, the impending collapse scenario received more support from abroad than from within South Korea.

Since the defection of Hwang Jang Yop, the collapse scenario has lost popularity and saliency because as one of the most high-ranking insiders of the North, he strongly refuted the reliability of the collapse scenario. According to him, the North Korean regime is too resilient.

\textsuperscript{5}Caspar Weinberger and Peter Schweizer, *The Next War* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1996), pp. 1–98. The authors allude to the point that in case of a Korean War, the United States might end the war being afraid of Chinese intervention and expansion of war into a regional war at the time when it regains the Demarcation Line.


\textsuperscript{7}According to General Luck, North Korea will go through seven steps: resource depletion, prioritization, local independence, suppression, resistance, fracture, and realignment. North Korea is assessed to be in the fourth stage. *Chosun Ilbo*, March 31, 1996.
to collapse. He suggested four reasons to support his argument:\(^8\) (1) The military is so cohesively united around Kim Jong Il that it is impossible for any military coup to occur; (2) Their militant domestic control and tight control over the inflow of external information can detect any kind of grassroots resistance movement immediately; (3) Interestingly enough, North Korean intellectuals believe that the North Korean political regime is fairly stable relative to its South Korean counterpart, and; (4) The leadership has a strong belief (no matter what misperception and miscalculation North Koreans retain) that the North can defeat the South in a war, thus enabling them to find an exit route from collapse even in the worst case. Others add two more assumptions to the ones noted above: North Koreans are accustomed to severe extended famine, and are extremely obedient to the Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il heir regimes. Therefore, the North Korean regime has succeeded in controlling without any noticeable resistance and will do so in the future, too. These views are widely supported by Chinese and North Korean leaders and experts.

However, those who strongly believe in a North Korean collapse argue against those who do not. They suggest six points in their counterarguments: (1) The Kim Jong Il leadership has no ability to turn its economy around;\(^9\) (2) North Korea will collapse as a result of rapid reform because a substantial amount of foreign assistance will only be given contingent upon North Korea’s systemic change; (3) The worse the economic problems become, the more defectors and fractures within the leadership will occur; (4) The legitimacy of the Kim Jong Il leadership will be in danger due to strong and wide-ranging resistance once the general population recognizes the bankruptcy and hypocrisy of the Juche ideology; (5) As people’s resistance becomes organized, a military coup or other type of revolution from the top will take place, and; (6) Change in the political and economic systems will precipitate the end of the state ultimately.


Although collapse is thought to be the least likely scenario,\textsuperscript{10} this section handles unification through absorption by the South after a North Korean collapse. Herein, the collapse scenario can be divided into two sub-scenarios: implosion (internal collapse) or explosion (external military attack). Since the military attack scenario was explained above, the internal collapse absorption by the South that will follow will be analyzed in this section.

By the term “collapse,” I refer to the case in which the North Korean regime and state system breaks down within a fairly short time span. North Korea’s internal collapse can take place as a result of two cases: a military coup or a revolution from the bottom which may bring about internal disorder and instability, the impact of which will go beyond North Korea’s borders. Millions of refugees and possible conflicts of interest among South Korea and outside powers will follow. Prolonged internal conflicts may result as was witnessed in Eastern Europe at the demise of the Communist system.

Nevertheless, a military coup is very unlikely in North Korea as long as the present relationship between Kim Jong Il and the military continues. Instead, a palace coup may occur in the process of North Korea’s radical economic reform, which the military hard-liners may oppose strongly. However, a military coup might end in failure like the aborted coup attempt in the former Soviet Union in August 1991. Therefore, the only way in which a military coup might succeed is if grassroots resistance spreads out on a national level.

Despite the small chance of popular resistance, a case where the Kim Jong Il leadership fails to provide a minimal level of subsistence to its populace is imaginable. In that event, if the outside world provides a substantial amount of economic assistance and the North Korean regime is required to accept a wide range of reforms, the situation in North Korea might become uncontrollable, thereby resulting in collapse. Even in this case, such events would not happen without a massive information campaign against the North Korean leadership regarding its acceptance of external assistance including massive assistance from South Korea. This means that South Korea and other governments should take actions to flood external influence and in-

\textsuperscript{10}The Samsung Economic Research Institute, \textit{Korean Unification Scenarios}, October 1996.
formation into the North in the process of radical reform such that North Korea will lose control over its society. Then, people’s expectations will rise, ultimately toppling the regime.

In the internal collapse scenario, it is very important for South Korea and the United States to limit their objectives so as not to cause misunderstanding and misperception on the North Korean side, which might cause North Korea to attempt a preemptive strike against the South. In managing the implosion scenario, South Korean objectives would be to confine North Korean instability within North Korean borders, to help restore stability in North Korea in a timely manner, and to make every effort to deter North Korea from considering going to war.

To achieve those objectives successfully, the South Korean government will need to take measures to reduce the deep-rooted aspirations for unification among South Koreans because demands from the South Korean populace for immediate unification might compound the problem to an inextricable degree. It would be more advantageous for the South Korean government to announce that it not only wants the North to restore stability as soon as possible, but is also willing to provide diplomatic and economic assistance to help in this effort. However, South Korea should continue to remind the North Korean leadership that human rights and democratic values should be respected throughout the entire crisis, in efforts to prevent massacres within North Korea like those that continue to occur in Kosovo. In addition, South Korea should not take any military actions against North Korea unless attacked by the North. This would help to limit the crisis within North Korean borders.

Throughout the entire crisis, South Korea should seek collaboration with the United States in managing the crisis. Organizing and running the South Korea–U.S. joint crisis management team would be the best option. In this regard, organizing a joint team on the political level is as critical to successful crisis management as on the military level given the fact that the leadership of the two nations has often exhibited differences concerning how to manage crises on the Korean peninsula in the past. Trilateral cooperation among South Korea, the United States, and Japan is also a requirement in managing the crisis. In this connection, establishing UN forces which include the participation of all countries surrounding Korea will be
necessary to stabilize North Korea as well as to address their security concerns.11

South Korea and the United States should undertake joint measures to prevent China’s intervention into a North Korean internal crisis. It has often been pointed out that China would likely intervene in North Korea if they were asked to do so by the North Korean leadership. Some Chinese rejected this case outright when they were questioned about such a scenario saying that there are no pro-Chinese or anti-Chinese factions whatsoever in the North Korean military. If political turmoil in North Korea takes place, it will be more difficult for the Chinese to intervene because China maintains a policy of non-intervention in other nations’ internal affairs. Nevertheless, U.S. and South Korean preventive diplomacy with China during times of peace will be more than relevant to effectively deter China from intervening in the North Korean crisis.

If a crisis in North Korea develops into an uncontrollable situation, it will be necessary for the United Nations to intervene according to their peacekeeping and enforcing mechanisms. In this case, the South Korean government will be required to explain fully the rationale to the Korean populace.

THE STATUS QUO AND MUDDLING THROUGH12

Most observers inside and outside South Korea predict North Korea will continue to muddle through in the short to mid term. According to research by the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, most experts believe that North Korea will continue to maintain the status quo for the next five years.13

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13Korea Institute for Defense Analyses led a joint research to assess prospects for North Korea’s change in 1997, and the author took the task to develop future scenarios for North Korea. It was predicted that, within the next three to five years, North Korea will survive. However, more experts predicted that, in the next six to fifteen years, North Korea will collapse.
Although North Korea’s economic indicators have already reached the crisis level, it is very difficult to tell whether North Korea is on the verge of collapse solely based on economic indicators. It will take several more years to see whether some political and military indicators are also changing from normal to crisis level. The food crisis will be resolved with external assistance for the time being. The military successfully controls the internal situation. Civil society is so underdeveloped that it will take much longer to see any substantial resistance developing. However, most experts believe that North Korea will approach collapse within six to ten years if North Korea does not accomplish substantial internal reform. Unless North Korea challenges the outside world with a second long-range test firing or withdraws from the Geneva Agreed Framework, the outside world will continue their engagement policies. Whether North Korea will succeed in reforming its political and economic system hinges on their ability and determination. However, it will take a long time for North Korea to turn its economy around while maintaining domestic stability. The supremacy of the military over other sectors will continue. Thus, muddling through is the most likely scenario for the short and mid term.

The strategic and military implications for the muddling through scenario are that South Korea and the United States should not risk a fundamental change in their current policies. Their deterrence and defense strategies should be reiterated on a regular basis to prevent North Korea from contemplating use of force or threat to use force. Contingency planning is also required to hedge against the uncertainties arising from North Korea’s uncertain future.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

North Korea is going through changes, however small. Although the outside world is pursuing more reforms and openings in North Korea, North Korea is experiencing changes starting from a controlled opening toward more substantial change. Without change, North Korea simply cannot hold the country together any longer. If the combined engagement strategy of South Korea and the United States works, the gradual integration scenario will unfold. Then, South Korea and the United States should utilize all the channels to
the maximum extent to induce North Korea to take corresponding steps for reform and opening.

From a strategic and military perspective, South Korea and the United States should propose concrete measures to reduce tension and increase cooperation in the military realm. Arms control and substantial arms reduction including the pulling back of North Korean forward forces should be implemented. To accomplish peaceful unification, gradual arms reduction measures are required in tandem with U.S. force reconfiguration. Whether substantial arms reduction measures will be discussed and agreed upon in the Four Party talks is not certain yet. The U.S. and South Korea’s current policies show that the United States is engaging North Korea to resolve North Korea’s WMD problem while the Four Party talks address the conventional weapons problem. Dividing the military issue into WMD and conventional arms and approaching North Korea separately depending on the issues will not only make it more difficult to achieve the stated goals, but will make it difficult to calculate the security benefits from the negotiations with the North. In addition, under this dispersed approach the price North Korea will extract for concessions will tend to increase.

Therefore, it is necessary to design a more integrated approach in terms of channels as well as substance. South Korea and the United States should design a more comprehensive and integrated approach to address the totality of the security threats posed by North Korea now and in the future. The economic benefits North Korea could get from the outside world should be closely linked to the security costs that North Korea is required to pay. Above all, it is necessary to more closely integrate the South Korean sunshine policy and the U.S. engagement policy to achieve a more desirable outcome from engagement with the North. Approaching the issues of WMD and conventional arms control through a single channel would be more effective in terms of tension reduction with less of a price being paid to North Korea.

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To accelerate the gradual integration process, South Korea and the United States should step up their efforts to reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula mainly by persuading North Korea to draw down its forces. To do so, South Korea and the United States should organize a combined team at the governmental as well as at the expert levels to develop arms control strategies and measures that enhance security and confidence building on the Korean peninsula. Until the two Koreas reach an agreement to reduce tension on the Korean peninsula, South Korea and the United States should maintain their current deterrence and defense strategy and robust military readiness to deter North Korea.

Although the chances for North Korea’s collapse are not great, we need to prepare for those contingencies. Otherwise, North Korea may exploit our lack of preparedness. Despite our efforts to reduce North Korean military capabilities, the chances that North Korea might provoke a crisis still remain high because Kim Jong Il rules the country based on support from the military. Because North Korea is well aware that South Korea, the United States, China, Japan, and Russia do not want to escalate a crisis into a war, North Korea will likely exploit our willingness to maintain peace and stability on the Korean peninsula by threatening to go to war as a means to receive more concessions from the external world, as was witnessed in the nuclear crisis of 1994.

To prevent crises, we need to establish regular channels for dialogue between the two Koreas because such interactions could help prevent or reduce crises by lessening misunderstanding and misperception on the North Korean side as well as enhancing confidence and security between the two Koreas. In this regard, the Four Party talks are relevant to resolving the future crises smoothly. This forum contributes to deterring North Korea from going to a war in the event of crisis because China is a party and can play a constructive role in dissuading North Korea from taking unilateral actions through regular contacts with North Korea, the United States, and South Korea. Furthermore, the Four Party talks not only contribute to building a peaceful regime on the Korean peninsula but also to taming Chinese policy and attitudes to coordination between the United States and South Korea in crisis management on the Korean peninsula. The latter would help restrain China from intervening in a Korean crisis.
Should a crisis break out, it is important for South Korea and the United States to take joint measures that had been previously agreed upon. It is very important for the two nations to prevent misunderstanding and to minimize their conflicts of interest. Thus, it is critical for the political and military leaders of the two allies to conduct peacetime exercises to manage crises effectively in the interests of the two nations. Certainly, effective military-to-military exercises have been conducted regularly but nothing equivalent has occurred on the political level. As we experienced conflicts of interest in the race toward the Yalu River during the Korean War, and in subsequent crises such as the USS Pueblo case of 1968, and the Korean Tree Crisis (Murder on the DMZ) of 1976, it is very important for the two allies not to take unilateral actions at the time of crisis. As was witnessed in past crises, there have been major differences in the analyses and policies of the two countries. Therefore, it is very important for the two nations to reach consensus on a political level as well as on a political-military level on how to handle a future crisis on the peninsula. This will include clarifying the following points: when to start counterattacking the North Korean armed forces, how to counterattack, how far the U.S.–South Korean forces will go in retaliation against the North, who will go first and how far North will he go?

To prevent North Korean military efforts to exploit differences between the two allies, the United States should reaffirm its strong commitment to South Korean security on a regular basis, especially when North Korea is believed to be entering the process of collapse. The governments of the two nations should consult on their policies toward North Korea not only to prevent a crisis but also to manage more effectively the North Korean problem during peacetime. A strong U.S. commitment would absolutely reassure North Korea that U.S. resolve is firm and consistent in supporting South Korea in spite of American policy to improve relations with the North. It would also reaffirm that South Korea is an unchanging ally, thus preventing North Korean misperception or miscalculation that the United States might adopt a neutral stance between the two Koreas.

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If collapse occurs, the U.S. role in deterring Chinese intervention into North Korea is very critical. The United States was successful in preventing the intervention of other powers in the German unification. It will be required to play a similar role on the Korean peninsula. As such, an active U.S. diplomacy is expected to prevent direct intervention by Russia, China and Japan in a North Korean scenario. It is also important for South Korea and the United States to facilitate multilateral consultation on security issues in a five-nations forum (without North Korea if North Korea rejects participation) or in a six-nations forum (with North Korea’s participation) as a way to help resolve the future crisis on the Korean peninsula effectively. This is especially relevant to finding out the effective means for humanitarian aid necessary for rescuing refugees at the time of crisis.