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## Stopping the North Korean Nuclear Program

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### A CONTEXT OF DANGER

The North Korean nuclear program poses a major threat to the stability of Northeast Asia and, indirectly, to that of the Middle East. It could wreck the global non-proliferation regime. It can affect Japanese and South Korean security policies and U.S.-Chinese relations. It could even lead to a major conflict on the Korean Peninsula. For these reasons, the "North Korean problem" is probably the most dangerous and consequential national security challenge the United States faces in Asia, and perhaps anywhere in the world.

The situation on the Korean Peninsula is inherently dangerous—the North Korean regime is desperately trying to retain power, knows that the fundamental trends are adverse, and possesses a large military structure. The combination of these three is a classic cause of war. War could also result from the chaos accompanying the collapse of the current North Korean government. At the same time, North Korea seems determined to acquire nuclear weapons. If it succeeds, the risks of any conflict involving North Korea would increase significantly, even if the North Koreans possessed only a few bombs. In addition, a North Korean nuclear capability might well lead the Japanese and South Koreans to reconsider their own policies on nuclear weapons. Japanese development of nuclear weapons could, in turn, begin a process that would

destroy the post-World War II regional security structure, with major, albeit uncertain, consequences for long-term U.S. interests in East Asia and the prospects of long-term peace.

The North Korean nuclear program also poses risks for U.S. allies in the Middle East, such as Israel and Saudi Arabia. Technical cooperation between North Korea and Iran on ballistic missiles has already raised concerns, and Iranian-North Korean cooperation on nuclear development (e.g., technology-sharing arrangements or Iranian funding, testing, or even purchasing of Korean weapons) might create a major crisis and a major new threat to American interests in a critical region.

North Korea's contemptuous treatment of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors may encourage other potential proliferators such as Iran to follow a similar approach. If the world does not act against North Korea, why should other proliferators believe it will act against them? Cooperation with the IAEA is likely to decline, and the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), as sought by the Clinton administration, will become more difficult to obtain.

The nuclear issue heightens the danger of another Korean War. North Korea might be willing to risk war rather than give up its nuclear weapons potential. It might miscalculate American resolve in the light of

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events in Somalia and Haiti; it has already threatened war to deter the imposition of economic sanctions. It might invade South Korea in response to, or even independently of, the imposition of sanctions. Should it actually acquire nuclear weapons, it might perceive less danger to itself from starting a conflict against South Korea in the hope of achieving reunification on its terms.

There is also the additional danger that chaos accompanying the collapse of the North Korean regime could draw in South Korean forces and lead to a broader conflict. North Korea can at any time face a succession crisis. The North Korean leader, Kim Il Sung, is 81 years old. His son, Kim Jong Il, has been designated to succeed him but may face opposition: He lacks his father's stature and prestige, and it is unclear to what extent he would enjoy the military's support.

## **MULTIPLE U.S. INTERESTS**

The Korean problem is not merely one more example of nuclear proliferation and the need for arms control, but it is primarily a *strategic* problem with broad regional and global consequences. It is different from, and ultimately more serious than, the proliferation problems that exist with respect to Pakistan and India, or Ukraine. What, then, are relevant U.S. interests?

First, the United States generally seeks a world environment that is conducive to stable economic and political development. This implies avoiding costly wars or even military threats that would require the United States to shift additional resources into defense. In particular, the United States wants no second Korean war. It also prefers that national developments in the Far East proceed with a minimum of militarization and within the current security framework. Along these lines, if Japan, for example, withdrew from the NPT because of a perceived need to protect itself militarily, such a development would probably stimulate tensions and a non-productive arms race in the region. Over time, serious regional problems would probably arise, and possibly wars. Any U.S. environment-shaping strategy should seek to avoid such developments.

It is also in the U.S. interest to have a special security role in the Far East that is regarded as benevolent but essential. Having such a role probably enhances the United States' opportunities for friendly and mutually beneficial trade relations, which in turn creates economic growth.

Next, it is in the U.S. interest that there be a continued progression toward liberal democracy, albeit in multiple forms based on national cultures and choices. The world is a more dangerous place when inhabited by armed nations with totalitarian governments.

Lastly, the United States has interests and objectives that call for a reversal of trends toward nuclear weapons proliferation. It is in everyone's interest to see fewer rather than more nations with weapons of mass destruction and related delivery systems. The United States also wants to discourage nations from selling such weapons to U.S. enemies or to those of U.S. allies.

All of these considerations make North Korea a very important and potentially dangerous near-term challenge for the United States. Given the importance of the issue and situation in North Korea, the United States needs to formulate its objective and develop a strategy for confronting "the North Korean problem."

## **U.S. OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY**

In an interview on November 7, 1993, President Clinton stated that "North Korea cannot be allowed to develop a nuclear bomb." To be confident that this objective—preventing North Korean development of a nuclear weapon—has been achieved, the United States must (1) assure the continuity of IAEA routine safeguards; (2) account for past diversion of plutonium by conducting special inspections of relevant suspect sites, and verify the disposal of the diverted material; and (3) establish a long-term monitoring and inspection regime, including both routine and special inspections, to detect any future diversion.

Achieving this objective thus requires—assuming the continued existence of a separate North Korea—the cooperation or acquiescence of its government. This could come about in several ways: First, North Korea's government could collapse and be replaced by a new regime that seeks friendly relations with the South and a place in the world community. Second, the current North Korean regime could conclude pragmatically that it was in its interest to "cash in its chips," i.e., to comply with U.S. nuclear-related demands in return for significant economic and political rewards from the United States and its allies. Third, North Korea could decide to cancel its program to avoid or remove economic sanctions, out of fear of military attack, or to obtain a cessation of military attacks that had already begun.

For each of these ways in which North Korea might come to cooperate with the United States, there corresponds a possible strategy. Each strategy has its own risks and benefits. And there are substantial uncertainties, especially since U.S. knowledge about North Korea is limited. The first strategy would involve waiting until the current North Korean government disintegrates as the result of decay or the realignment of internal forces. The second strategy would involve exploring the possibility of "buying" improved

behavior. The third would involve coercive actions, including, possibly, the direct use of military force. The United States could also adopt a strategy that mixes elements of these strategies. We outline such a composite strategy at the end of this paper.

## **A STRATEGY OF PATIENCE**

The United States could adopt a strategy of waiting for the collapse of the North Korean regime, which, objectively, has been a failure and whose long-term prospects, given the economic crisis and its diplomatic isolation, are bleak. There are some reports of increased popular dissatisfaction as well as rumors of unrest in the military although, for the present, the repressive apparatus of the state appears intact. It is uncertain how long Kim Il Sung will survive. It is also uncertain whether, upon his death, his son and designated heir, Kim Jong Il, will be able to consolidate power without a major succession struggle. Although there can be no guarantees, a successor regime may, on either nationalist or selfish grounds, seek better relations with South Korea and be willing to give up its nuclear program in return for economic investment and aid. It is also possible that the complete collapse of North Korea's government, leading to rapid reunification with the South, is merely a matter of time.

This approach would likely be supported by China and, at present, would appear to enjoy the support of Japan and a substantial body of opinion in South Korea, although a cleavage of opinions is emerging: One side argues that the North Korean nuclear program should be stopped at any cost, and the other argues for learning to live with the North Korean bomb. A strategy of waiting also requires the least amount of additional effort by the United States, which can continue to rely largely on diplomacy, apply political pressure, and offer minor incentives for altered behavior, doing so without particular expectation or insistence on success, while waiting for events in North Korea to take their natural course.

Such an approach—perhaps combined with minor incentives—might keep North Korea within the NPT and thus allow the routine safeguards system to function with respect to declared sites, which would decrease the likelihood of further diversion of fissile material. If North Korea cooperates with such an approach, its nuclear weapons arsenal would not grow beyond the small number of weapons it could produce using the material it has already diverted. On the other hand, even if the United States follows this strategy, North Korea might remain unwilling to cooperate fully with the IAEA with regard to routine inspections. The significance of this is not entirely clear, but unless

continuous surveillance is maintained (something the IAEA believes the recent North Korean offer does not fully permit), additional undetectable diversion of fuel may take place.

Most important, the strategy does not deal with the material already diverted (reportedly, from one to several bombs' worth). Thus, under this strategy, there would be a distinct risk that North Korea could develop a few operational nuclear weapons before the regime collapsed. In addition, there is no assurance that a successor regime would be willing or able to give up its nuclear weapons. A post-Kim regime is likely to be weak and therefore might find it harder to make the difficult decision to give up the country's nuclear capability. Once North Korea possesses nuclear weapons, it might also export or share its nuclear capability—as it is now doing with regard to ballistic missiles.

A strategy of patience therefore implies a willingness to live with North Korean nuclear weapons, i.e., a relaxation of the U.S. stated objective. Possible implications might include requirements to (1) enhance South Korean defense capability, (2) develop a ballistic missile defense capability for South Korea and Japan, (3) create new political mechanisms to retain South Korean and Japanese confidence in the U.S. alliance, and (4) rework U.S. military planning for a Korean contingency.

In addition, a policy based on such a willingness would significantly reduce the credibility of the U.S. global non-proliferation policy and of the IAEA inspection regime under the NPT. If North Korea developed a nuclear weapon while remaining within the NPT regime, the loss of credibility would be even greater.

## **A STRATEGY OF INCENTIVE-DRIVEN PERSUASION**

The second conceptual strategy involves "carrots." What incentives can the United States offer the North Korean leadership to agree to forswear nuclear weapons and accept an adequate inspections regime? The North Korean elites may seek security from invasion or coercion, an "honorable" transition to a post-communist regime, personal security and good treatment for themselves, long-term success of their own government, or something else. Presumably, they are very worried about the long-term survival of their regime. In the long term, the survival of the communist regime is a long shot in any case: However, the question is not what we think might ensure or lengthen the regime's survival, but what *they* think.

There are any number of things that the United States, South Korea, and Japan can offer. In offering incentives, however, the United States must not

undermine its ties with Japan or South Korea. Japanese, South Korean, and U.S. policies must remain synchronized. In particular, the United States should not offer anything that might suggest a weakening U.S. commitment to South Korea (such as further U.S. troop withdrawals or restraints on U.S. military activities if those restraints would harm the U.S. ability to aid in the defense of South Korea during this dangerous period in which a desperate North Korean attack is plausible).

Broadly speaking, there are three types of positive incentives the United States can offer: political, security-related, and economic.

### **Political Incentives**

Politically, North Korea appears to seek full and “normal” diplomatic relations with the United States and Japan; ideally, it would like to negotiate with the United States over the heads of the South Koreans. Thus, the high-level bilateral (i.e., without South Korea) meetings the United States has held with North Korean officials constitute an incentive. Ultimately, the United States could hold out for the prospect of full diplomatic relations with Pyongyang, assuming that the benefits were such that South Korea would concur. Such recognition might be seen as enhancing the regime’s prestige and hence its prospects for survival; by itself, however, it would seem to be too small a benefit to induce the regime to abandon its nuclear weapons program. It is also possible that the North Koreans raise the issue in part to cause difficulties between South Korea and the United States. (This is not to say that they do not seek diplomatic recognition for its perceived benefits to them, only that these benefits might be regarded as relatively small.)

### **Security-Related Incentives**

With respect to security issues, the North Koreans have made known a wish list: cancellation of the annual U.S.–South Korean TEAM SPIRIT military exercise, “guarantees” against any use of nuclear weapons against them (including, as it is sometimes phrased, the removal of the U.S. nuclear “umbrella” protecting South Korea), and the inspection of U.S. bases in South Korea to verify the absence of nuclear weapons. These goals are achievable: Indeed, the United States canceled TEAM SPIRIT in 1992 because of the progress in the North-South talks and is reportedly willing to do so again under certain circumstances. Similarly, the United States and South Korea agreed to mutual North-South inspections that would open U.S. air bases in South Korea to North Korean inspection. If North Korea were non-nuclear (and not allied to a nuclear power), the U.S.

standard Negative Security Assurances would render the nuclear-umbrella issue essentially moot.

Thus, it is likely that behind the North’s demands, the achieving of which by 1991–1992 was within its grasp, lurk some other goals, such as the removal of all U.S. forces from the South. Short of that step, it is hard to see how fulfillment of these demands would materially increase the northern regime’s longevity, although it might possibly increase marginally North Korean confidence that an attack on the South would succeed at tolerable cost and risk. Paradoxically, removal of U.S. forces from the South might undermine the North Korean regime’s claim to legitimacy, which rests on the contrast between its prickly “Juche” (self-reliance) ideology and the supposed subordination of South Korea to the United States. Despite their rhetoric, the North Koreans might not view U.S. presence in totally negative terms, since they might see it as serving in the long run to restrain South Korea or Japan.

### **Economic Incentives**

Economically, the North is in dire need of help. Both South Korea and Japan were clearly willing in 1991–1992 to expand economic contacts, including assistance, trade, and investment, provided that the nuclear issue could be resolved. It is important for the North that the South Koreans, cognizant of the German example, would prefer a period of *gradually* expanding economic contacts, rather than immediate and costly reunification. Thus, the question is whether the North Korean regime sees its problems as primarily economic and whether it believes that plausible levels of assistance, trade, and investment from South Korea and Japan would enhance its prospects for survival. (One might argue that such contacts with the outside world could just as easily be fatal to the regime.)

### **Assessment of the “Carrots” Strategy**

As the above discussion suggests, it is unlikely that a strategy of positive incentives will work. Nothing that the United States can realistically offer is likely to improve the regime’s perceptions about its chances of survival very much, and some of the items being considered might actually decrease its life expectancy. In particular, what the United States offers is not likely to seem as conducive to the survival of the North Korean regime and the well-being of its leaders as nuclear weapons are. However, it is possible that the North Korean perception could be very different from that of the United States. This is an area where further investigation might be very useful, although it would be difficult to conduct.

In addition, this strategy sets a bad precedent. Giving the North Koreans something significant that the United States would not have given them but for their illegal nuclear activities could encourage others to follow suit. If nothing else, it could make it very difficult for the IAEA to obtain permission for special inspections in other countries.

## **A STRATEGY OF NEGATIVE INCENTIVES AND COERCION**

The third strategy would be one of “sticks,” a strategy that would seek to compel the North Koreans to give up their nuclear program, or, failing that, to cause direct harm to the program. The major sticks, the first and last of which would require international sanction, probably in the U.N. Security Council, are the following:

- Trade sanctions, and military enforcement of them.
- Increasing the size and readiness of U.S. forces in South Korea and encouraging South Korea to increase its own military spending, which the North, with its considerably smaller economy, would not be able to match.
- Military attacks, either on nuclear, missile, and perhaps other weapons-of-mass-destruction facilities, or on other targets, or both. (The threat of such attacks may have coercive value as well.)

### ***Embargoes and Other Trade Sanctions***

Effective trade sanctions would include a trade embargo (e.g., on import of fuel and export of weapons) and a ban on currency transfers into North Korea. Such sanctions would require Chinese cooperation, since China is North Korea’s major trading partner and since the land border between the two countries would be otherwise unsealable. In any case, the United States would need at least Chinese acquiescence in the U.N. Security Council. Russian cooperation would be required as well, because of the Russian land border and veto power. Military enforcement of an embargo from the sea would not be effective in the absence of Chinese and Russian willingness to close down overland routes. Japanese cooperation is important because remittances from the Korean community in Japan provide a major part of North Korea’s hard currency income. (A U.N. embargo would provide “cover” for a Japanese government that is reluctant to stop these remittances on its own.)

An embargo could succeed either by inducing the regime to change its position or by causing its collapse. If, however, the embargo were painful enough to cause the regime to seriously consider giving up its nuclear

program, it would be painful enough to cause the regime to worry about itself being fatally weakened, which might tempt it to risk everything on one last throw of the dice—i.e., to attack the South in the hope of reunifying Korea on its own terms. Because of this possibility, which is quite credible to at least some South Koreans, the South Korean government would have to be convinced that the risk of imposing an embargo was in fact low and/or that the embargo was absolutely necessary, that the risk that South Korea would run if North Korea obtained nuclear weapons was greater, and that everything had been done to minimize the expected damage to the South.

Although a northern regime facing collapse might be tempted to start a war, it is also possible that, aware of its own weakness and the performance of U.S. forces in Desert Storm, it would want to avoid war. Therefore, it might well be sensitive to threats of military action by the United States and/or the South—if it believed that the United States were serious. Thus, there may be value in joint U.S.–South Korean statements that, under certain circumstances, the United States and South Korea would have no alternative but to take military action. Such circumstances might involve provocative war preparations by the North or the North having impending operational nuclear capabilities.

Although acquiescence to U.S. demands would be plausible if North Korea believed its chances of prevailing in war were low, it would more likely try to cope with the embargo by seeking to become even more self-reliant, at the expense of tightening its belt and allowing the living standards of its population to decline even further. In this case, it would probably withdraw from the NPT and, to the extent that it could, accelerate its nuclear program unhampered by any IAEA inspections, or by even limited surveillance of declared facilities. It is unclear which would come first: the North’s attaining nuclear status or collapsing from exhaustion.

### ***Strengthening the U.S. Military Posture and Protecting Against Attack***

Under the coercive strategy, trade sanctions could be supplemented by increasing the military pressure on North Korea by enlarging and modernizing South Korean military forces, by increasing the level of U.S. presence in and near South Korea, and by raising the readiness of forces (including through increased exercise activity). There could be four objectives: (1) applying pressure on the North by indicating to them that they are on a potentially dangerous course, (2) deterring a North Korean attack on South Korea, (3) preparing to deal decisively with any invasion by the North

(particularly to be able to defend Seoul), and (4) being prepared to enforce the embargo.

A policy of deliberate military pressure might well convince the North, especially its military officers, that its course of action was extremely dangerous and could lead to disaster. For both defensive and coercive purposes, planning and exercises might include offensive operations. But military pressure could lead the North to feel even more desperate and lead it to start a major war against South Korea and the U.S. forces in the region.

Proposing such an alternative would be a very delicate matter; mishandled, it could easily unnerve the South Koreans and Japanese. On the other hand, if this issue is not resolved in the near term, tensions are likely to mount, which would make U.S. allies more receptive to efforts to bolster South Korean defenses.

### ***Military Options***

It is implausible that the United States and South Korea would today attack North Korea. However, views could change rapidly if, for example, it was concluded that North Korea was about to test a nuclear device or was making serious preparations for an invasion. Contemplating military options now is better than considering them unthinkable until such a time, in part because the United States already has strategic warning and in part because military options would require groundwork.

A military attack on the North could aim at either (1) destroying or substantially setting back the nuclear weapons program, or (2) inducing the North Korean regime to give up its programs and agree to a meaningful inspection regime. (While the first goal would not meet the full U.S. objective, in that it would not prevent North Korea from continuing to pursue a nuclear capability, it would buy time and could lead North Korea to conclude that its quest was futile.) Depending on the goal, there would be different military options and different prospects for gaining coalition support.

Known North Korean nuclear facilities could be attacked. While such attacks might not eliminate the North Korean nuclear capability completely (especially if North Korea had already reprocessed enough plutonium to make one or more nuclear weapons and were able to successfully hide the stockpile and weapon-system development), an attack might still set the program back by years—a long time relative to the regime's life expectancy.

Going further and inducing North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons program and submit to tough inspection would likely require a broader and more

decisive attack, against not only nuclear facilities, but political, economic, and general military targets as well. Such a larger attack might or might not be politically feasible and would surely require international sanction. In response to such an attack, North Korea might well try the Iraqi "cheat and retreat" strategy—making concessions whenever the military pressure became too great, only to take them back after it let up. The United States would have to be prepared for a lengthy campaign to convince the North Korean regime that it had no choice but to accept effective inspections. While success against North Korea might be incomplete, it seems likely that the North could be kept on the defensive, unable to threaten the South. Further, the forceful actions would be an extraordinarily powerful signal of a changed world attitude toward proliferation, a signal with potentially profound effects on other nations contemplating developing nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction.

Destroying North Korean nuclear facilities might be the easiest military action on which to get allied and, perhaps, Chinese cooperation, but attacking its political, military, and economic infrastructure is likely to be more effective as a compellent. However, the use of force against the North Koreans risks triggering a major conflict on the Peninsula—a war that could be very costly for the South Koreans and the U.S. forces. It is also possible that the North Koreans would respond in more limited ways against Seoul, which could cause political turmoil.

### ***When to Use Force if Force Is Necessary***

If the United States decides it must use force, it would be in its interest to do so before North Korea has acquired an operational nuclear capability. Given what was discovered about the Iraqi nuclear program after the war (including the large intelligence shortfalls), it was fortunate that the war occurred when it did, rather than after Iraq had acquired nuclear weapons. Many observers doubt that the United States would have been willing to evict Saddam from Kuwait if it meant risking nuclear use. The same might be true with regard to North Korea. It follows that if there is to be a Peninsula war, perhaps on the scale of Desert Storm, the United States would be much better off fighting it against a non-nuclear enemy.

### **SINE QUA NON FOR ANY STRATEGY: BUILDING THE COALITION**

To pursue any strategy successfully, especially the last two, a coalition approach is essential. The key players whose cooperation or acquiescence would be

required are South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia (because of its U.N. Security Council position).

## REVISITING OUR OBJECTIVE

We have discussed three alternative strategies in pursuit of U.S. objectives. A strategy of patience is unlikely to be successful in preventing North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons. Relying on this approach is likely to produce an increasing gap between the U.S. objective and its strategy and thus undermine its credibility. North Korea would likely become a *de facto* nuclear weapons state, although it is not clear how, or whether, it would make this fact known. If its possession of nuclear weapons became known, then it might become possible to obtain international consent for economic sanctions—if sanctions had not been sought or agreed to earlier.

Positive incentives might have a chance of working if the United States could obtain a better understanding of the motivations and perceptions of the North Korean leadership. One possible source of insight might be East European and former Soviet officials who have dealt with North Korea in the past. In any case, if the United States uses positive incentives, it should consider how it could distinguish the North Korean case from that of other potential proliferators, to minimize the effect of any bad precedent it would be setting.

Negative incentives such as sanctions would require Chinese cooperation, which cannot be taken for granted. Whether the sanctions would lead the North Koreans to accept the full range of IAEA inspections is unclear. On the other hand, it could cause the regime to collapse or to lash out against South Korea (e.g., with artillery attacks on Seoul). Alternatively, the regime might be able to survive the imposition of sanctions; in this case, it could withdraw from the NPT altogether and press ahead with an expanded nuclear program unhindered by any inspections. At that point, the United States would have to choose between containment and deterrence (retaining sanctions and taking the necessary defensive steps) or the use of force.

Use of force by a U.S.–allied coalition has better prospects for achieving the U.S. objective, either by setting back the program or by producing a more compliant North Korea—depending on how much and how effectively the force is applied. However, given the risk of triggering a second Korean war, it is unclear whether the South Koreans or Japanese could be induced to agree.

Ultimately, the United States needs to compare the risks of allowing North Korea to continue its nuclear weapons program (using already diverted fissile materials) with the risks of adopting an objective that

may require the use of increasingly tougher measures. If the latter risks are too great, then the United States might be forced to change its objective. For example, the United States might soften its demands for special inspections and, in effect, acquiesce to a small North Korean nuclear capability. The United States might insist only that the North allow routine inspections and stay within the NPT. A strategy of positive incentives and the threat of stronger measures might well be sufficient to produce such an outcome.

Should the United States remain committed to President Clinton's objective, it will have to rely increasingly on sticks. In particular, it must realize that time is not working in its favor, as North Korea can use the time to convert the diverted material into nuclear weapons. Thus, while the United States must be ready to react to any provocative new developments (such as North Korean acquisition of additional fissile material, by diversion or otherwise, evidence of imminent or actual testing of a nuclear device, evidence of nuclear-related cooperation with Iran or other potential proliferators, etc.), it must also set a deadline for North Korean agreement to IAEA special, as well as routine, inspections.

Some of the elements of a possible game plan are as follows:

- Pushing for economic sanctions in early 1994 if North Korea has not agreed to full cooperation with the IAEA. Setting a deadline soon is important because there is the danger of getting trapped in a North Korean version of a “charm” offensive. North Korea might seek to keep discussions going (whether with the United States, IAEA, or South Korea) to gain time to create weapons from the material it already has.
- Taking steps now to improve U.S. knowledge of internal North Korean political processes, divisions, and negotiating style, as well as to collect the information that would be necessary to use military force effectively. Also, taking steps to improve U.S. understanding of Chinese attitudes toward and perceptions of North Korea, and ways to influence them.
- Assessing the effects over time of an economic embargo on North Korea.
- Making prudent preparations for possible war now to deter war and, should deterrence fail, to be in a strong position to win decisively and limit U.S. and South Korean losses. The United States and South Korea should also identify the actions that, if taken by the North, would constitute unacceptable final preparations for a sudden attack on the South, actions (akin to crossing “red lines”) that would

justify preemptive attack. Because of Seoul's proximity to the DMZ, plans should exist for exceedingly prompt actions in a military emergency. At the same time, the United States and South Korea should be cautious to avoid military actions that would be misconstrued by the North as preparations for a ground offensive into the North.

- Should war occur, the U.S. objectives should be to reunify the Korean Peninsula under democratic control.

The following military steps are illustrative:

- Focusing increased intelligence assets, both space and air-breathing, to get as much warning of a North Korean attack as possible.
- Enhancing the South Korean defensive posture on a high priority basis (e.g., with more multiple-launch rocket systems/air-to-air cruise missiles, counterartillery radars, and precision-guided munitions).
- Exercising command and control processes under war-is-plausible circumstances, including processes requiring rapid adaptation to surprise, and exercising related maneuver capabilities (which would greatly reduce the South's vulnerabilities and, at the same time, suggest possible South Korean offensive capability).
- Deploying three to five fighter squadrons, one carrier battle group, and one AH-64 battalion from the Continental United States. Increasing readiness of U.S. forces in South Korea. Deploying Patriots,

F-15Es with ground-based units, and F-117s, and prepositioning bombers and additional tankers in the region.

- Developing local capabilities for receiving decisive force, should it be necessary.
- Accelerating development of earth-penetrating weapons (given the North Korean use of underground facilities).

The proposals outlined here are obviously neither attractive nor easily palatable. It would be a tremendous challenge to U.S. leadership to gain support from its allies (even South Korea) for an activist strategy that involved the acknowledged possibility of military actions. Further, it is unlikely that the American public or Congress would look with favor on a strategy that raised the specter of a Korean war. Nonetheless, the "North Korean problem" is real, serious, and unlikely to be resolved successfully by a continuation of current policies. In addition, the North Korean problem is likely to become an acid test of U.S. seriousness about non-proliferation. Given the importance to the United States of East Asian stability specifically and counter-proliferation generally, it seems appropriate to take seriously the wider range of options we have presented.

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