

DECEMBER 6, 2016 | NUMBER 806

## Will China Solve the North Korea Problem?

The United States Should Develop a Diplomatic Strategy to Persuade Beijing to Help

BY DOUG BANDOW

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**N**ortheast Asia is perhaps the world's most dangerous flashpoint, with three neighboring nuclear powers, one the highly unpredictable and confrontational North Korea. For nearly a quarter century the United States has alternated between engagement and containment in attempting to prevent Pyongyang from developing nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has accelerated its nuclear and missile programs since Kim Jong-un took power in December 2011. Washington has responded with both bilateral and multilateral sanctions, but they appear to have only strengthened the Kim regime's determination to develop a sizeable nuclear arsenal. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has grown increasingly frustrated with its nominal ally, but the PRC continues to provide the DPRK with regime-sustaining energy and food aid.

The United States and South Korea, in turn, have grown frustrated with Beijing, which is widely seen as the solution to the North Korea problem. However, the Obama administration's approach has generally been to lecture the

PRC, insisting that it follow American priorities. Unsurprisingly, successive Chinese leaders have balked.

China does possess an unusual degree of influence in Pyongyang, but Beijing fears an unstable DPRK more than a nuclear DPRK. From China's standpoint, the possible consequences of a North Korean collapse—loose nukes, mass refugee flows, conflict spilling over its border—could be high. The Chinese leadership also blames Washington for creating a threatening security environment that discourages North Korean denuclearization.

Thus, the United States should change tactics. Instead of attempting to dictate, the United States must persuade the Chinese leadership that it is in the PRC's interest to assist America and U.S. allies. That requires addressing China's concerns by, for instance, more effectively engaging the North with a peace offer, offering to ameliorate the costs of a North Korean collapse to Beijing, and providing credible assurances that Washington would not turn a united Korea into another U.S. military outpost directed at the PRC's containment.

Such a diplomatic initiative still would face strong resistance in Beijing. But it may be the best alternative available.

“The United States should acknowledge the PRC’s geopolitical interests and encourage Beijing to reevaluate its policy toward North Korea.”

## INTRODUCTION

Washington should develop a comprehensive diplomatic strategy to persuade the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to cooperate with the United States, South Korea, and Japan in pressing the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to abandon its nuclear program. The North Korea problem continues to worsen, as the Kim regime tests more nuclear weapons and develops longer-range missiles. Tighter sanctions have proved little more effective than diplomatic entreaties. Many officials and analysts alike see action by the PRC as the best and perhaps only solution. On one of his many trips to Beijing, Secretary of State John Kerry pressed the PRC on the issue, declaring that “China has a unique role it can play.”<sup>1</sup>

However, the Chinese authorities remain unconvinced. They have taken slightly tougher positions toward the North over time, but so far have done little to compel Pyongyang to halt its forbidden weapons programs. Simply demanding that China intervene won’t work. Washington must persuade Beijing to do more. The objective should be to convince Beijing to back an allied denuclearization deal and cut all assistance for the North if the DPRK says no.

The PRC fears the consequences of a North Korean collapse but appears to be tiring of Pyongyang’s provocative conduct. The United States should acknowledge the PRC’s geopolitical interests and encourage Beijing to reevaluate its policy toward North Korea and press for either fundamental policy reform or a leadership change in Pyongyang. Denuclearization, as well as a reduction in the North’s other confrontational policies, could be achieved either way. Although the United States likely would prefer new leadership, a push for regime change likely would spark the strongest resistance.

## THE NORTH KOREAN PROBLEM

The most important security issue in Northeast Asia is North Korea. The DPRK

has unsettled the entire region with its nuclear weapons program, missile development, forward-based conventional forces, brutal domestic repression, and routine international brinkmanship. The North lacks allies, possesses a wretched economic base, and has only limited conventional military capabilities. Nevertheless, North Korea could trigger a catastrophic conflict.

Pyongyang’s leadership offers particular cause for concern. Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il offered ugly stability, displaying a wickedly sure hand in provoking the Republic of Korea (ROK) and America short of war. Kim Jong-un, Kim Jong-il’s son and successor, remains untested, and intelligence reports describe him as “exceptionally stubborn and not a very good listener.”<sup>2</sup> He has executed some 130 senior officials since taking power, starting with his uncle, Jang Song-taek, suggesting a mix of cruelty and paranoia.<sup>3</sup> No one knows what to do about the unstable, opaque, and brutal dictatorship with nuclear weapons.

The elder two Kims refused to risk their power by adopting political or economic reforms. Kim Jong-un’s “byungjin” policy sets economic growth with nuclear development as apparently equal priorities, despite obvious tensions between the two.<sup>4</sup> Fear for regime survival discourages any kind of genuine North Korean “sunshine” policy, or rapprochement with the South.<sup>5</sup> Some observers hope for a North Korean Mikhail Gorbachev or Deng Xiaoping, but so far Kim has not filled that role.<sup>6</sup> Kim’s brief sojourn in a Swiss boarding school apparently did not turn him into a liberal. Jang’s fate offers a dramatic warning to anyone who challenges Kim.

Moreover, with South Korea poised to “swallow” the North—a fear expressed by North Korean officials when I visited many years ago—reformist DPRK officials could not count on taking over the commanding heights of a reformed system like their counterparts did in Russia. Andrei Lankov of Kookmin University believes that discourages anyone voluntarily yielding power and thereby impedes transformative reform from within.<sup>7</sup>

A North Korean Spring is even less likely. No matter how dissatisfied the apparatchiks in Pyongyang may be, they have much to lose from radical change. Only if the regime no longer possesses the minimum resources necessary to support the nomenklatura and military is the elite likely to revolt. The rural majority suffers far more, but has little opportunity to organize.

There's also the possibility of collapse, widely hoped for and oft-predicted. The presumption of the Kim dynasty's imminent demise may explain years of South Korean subsidies to a regime that routinely threatened to turn Seoul into a lake of fire. However, the North Korean system continues to exude stability, despite occasional highly publicized executions and defections.<sup>8</sup> That could change, of course, but years of poverty and famine have demonstrated the regime's bloody resilience.

## FORCED TRANSFORMATION FROM BEYOND

History and current reality suggest that transformation will only come from outside. Diplomacy is not entirely moribund, but the belief that talks alone can transform the North Korean regime into something fundamentally different reflects the triumph of hope over experience. Pyongyang has invested heavily in its nuclear program despite years of sanctions. The DPRK has obvious reasons to maintain at least a small nuclear arsenal: nuclear weapons offer defense against an alliance possessing overwhelming military advantages, a source of international prestige, and a means to extort money and other benefits from neighbors. Moreover, the nuclear program helps maintain domestic political support, especially among the armed forces.

The regime still might be willing to make subsidiary deals—regarding limits on future nuclear production, reduction in conventional arms, and economic cooperation.<sup>9</sup> But even more modest agreements would not likely come easy or quick. And they would leave the North as both a dictatorship and nuclear power.

If not negotiations, then perhaps sanctions? There is widespread political support in Washington to penalize North Korea economically, despite the evident lack of success so far.<sup>10</sup> As a poor nation with outsized ambitions, the DPRK should be vulnerable. However, to achieve Washington's objectives, sanctions must be, like the porridge for Goldilocks, just right, neither too cold (ineffective) nor too hot (precipitating bloody collapse): an imploding, unstable, opaque, and brutal dictatorship with nuclear weapons might end up being the worst of all possible worlds. Moreover, starving the population with sanctions would be a morally dubious and likely ineffective means to transform regime personnel or policy.

Economic restrictions are unlikely to work without the PRC's support. China is North Korea's most important trading partner. China provides the North with up to (estimates vary) 90 percent of its energy, 80 percent of its consumer goods, and 45 percent of its food supplies.<sup>11</sup> Imported luxuries are used by the Kim family to reward the ruling elite.

Beijing's sanctions compliance has been inconsistent. As the Congressional Research Service reported six years ago:

China's enforcement of United Nations [UN] sanctions against North Korea is unclear. China has implemented some aspects of the sanctions that relate directly to North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear programs, but Beijing has been less strict on controlling exports of dual use products. Chinese shipments of banned luxury goods to the DPRK continue to increase.<sup>12</sup>

The PRC tightened cross-border trade earlier this year after the UN, with China's support, applied new limits in response to the DPRK's missile and nuclear tests. Enforcement also appears to be more serious than before.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, commerce continues. Pyongyang does not appear to be suffering unduly from the new measures and there is evidence of a rebound in trade.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Beijing

“Starving the population with sanctions would be a morally dubious and likely ineffective means to transform regime personnel or policy.”

“Imposing more hardship on the North Korean people typically has had little impact on the policy of the North Korean government.”

apparently demonstrated its displeasure over Seoul's decision to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system by relaxing economic controls with the North.<sup>15</sup>

The Chinese government also has restricted online access to North Korean trade figures, sparking speculation that it wants to impede outside scrutiny of its efforts.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, as attention fades, the PRC might relax enforcement, especially if it believes the sanctions are threatening Pyongyang's stability.<sup>17</sup>

Anyway, imposing more hardship on the North Korean people typically has had little impact on the policy of the North Korean government. In the late 1990s a half million or more people died from starvation, yet Pyongyang refused to change its agricultural or economic policies. In the short term, at least, tougher sanctions likely would strengthen state control and weaken private markets.

Finally, a number of figures, from military leaders to policy analysts to journalists have advocated military action to solve the North Korea problem.<sup>18</sup> Most famously, the Clinton administration prepared a strike on the North's nuclear facilities, which was planned in part by William J. Perry, then secretary of defense, and Ashton Carter, then assistant secretary and current secretary of defense.<sup>19</sup> The two later advocated attacking the North's missile facilities.<sup>20</sup>

However, the costly and unpopular war in Iraq is but a faint echo of what war with the North would entail. The DPRK could use artillery and missiles to wreak havoc in Seoul, the South's population, economic, and political heart.<sup>21</sup> Although there is little doubt that U.S. and South Korean forces would defeat any North Korean conventional attack, sheer volume would ensure substantial devastation of the South.<sup>22</sup> U.S. war-gaming consistently predicts at least one million casualties on both sides.<sup>23</sup> The North's possession of deliverable nuclear weapons obviously could multiply those numbers.

Might the DPRK be deterred from responding to a targeted strike on nuclear and

missile facilities? Having watched the United States dismantle Serbia and pursue regime change in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, North Korean officials likely would view any attack as a prelude to regime change, in which case they would have nothing to lose from striking with everything they have in response to any American action.<sup>24</sup> For Pyongyang it would be better to seize the initiative and preempt the attack that it expects to come.

Other solutions are in short supply. Despite Washington's long involvement on the Korean peninsula, the North should not be a U.S. responsibility. Washington should step back militarily and transfer the North Korea problem to other states.<sup>25</sup> The ROK long ago passed the DPRK in most measures of national power and is well able to defend itself.<sup>26</sup> Japan, too, could do far more militarily but continues to suffer from the overhang of history. Neither, however, has the means to coerce or persuade Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear program.

Russia's influence in the North has waxed and waned over the years. A quarter century ago, Moscow angered North Korea by opening relations with South Korea, which became an important economic partner of Russia. Moscow participated in the Six-Party Talks and recently revived ties with the DPRK, including providing small amounts of food aid.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, Russia remains only a modest actor in Korean affairs, with little desire to promote substantive change or take over the North as a dependent.

## THE CHINA SOLUTION

As a result, most everyone's attention turns to China. The PRC is the North's most important friend and only ally. Chen Ping, deputy managing editor of China's *Global Times*, observed: "There are many ways in which North Korea is not an ordinary country for China."<sup>28</sup>

U.S. officials have been particularly insistent that China act to curb the North's nuclear ambitions, and perhaps much more. In April 2013 Secretary of State John Kerry declared: "There is no group of leaders on the face of the planet

who have more capacity to make a difference in this than the Chinese, and everybody knows it, including, I believe, them.”<sup>29</sup> After the North’s nuclear test earlier this year, Kerry proclaimed: “China had a particular approach that it wanted to make, that we agreed and respected to give them space to implement that. Today in my conversation with the Chinese I made it very clear that it has not worked and we cannot continue business as usual.”<sup>30</sup> In June 2016 a senior Treasury official traveling with Secretary Jack Lew argued that “China has the ability to both create pressure and use that as a leverage that is a very important part of global efforts to isolate North Korea and get North Korea to change its policies.”<sup>31</sup>

Other prominent officials and candidates agree. Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) declared that “China does hold the key to this problem.” Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) complained: “It’s about time they stepped up to the plate and put a little pressure on this North Korean regime.”<sup>32</sup> Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump was even blunter: “China has to get involved. And China should solve that problem. And we should put pressure on China to solve the problem.”<sup>33</sup> Even Libertarian Party presidential candidate Gary Johnson agreed, though in less dramatic terms.<sup>34</sup>

So far, however, relying on the PRC has been a dead end. As Bonnie S. Glaser and Brittany Billingsley of the Center for Strategic and International Studies observe: “While China has occasionally used its clout to bring North Korea to the negotiating table and to discourage Pyongyang from engaging in provocations that could escalate to conflict on the Korean Peninsula, Beijing has continued to prioritize stability over denuclearization and has thus remained unwilling to put substantial pressure on the North.”<sup>35</sup>

American officials and analysts sometimes appear befuddled at Beijing’s reticence. However, the explanation is simple. The PRC sees its interests differently than the United States and its allies see theirs. China believes the status quo is better than the likely alternatives. The Kim regime is troublesome, but

too important to be allowed to fail. Chinese enthusiasm for backing Pyongyang appears to be weakening, but so far Beijing has tightened sanctions enforcement no more than the DPRK can bear.

In 1950 the PRC intervened in the Korean War to save the North from defeat, leading to a relationship widely described as close as “lips and teeth.” However, tensions between the two began during the conflict itself and later reflected Chinese opposition to Kim’s plan for monarchical succession to his son.<sup>36</sup> The PRC-U.S. and PRC-Republic of Korea rapprochements added stress. The DPRK maintained its independent course, moving ahead with missile and nuclear tests, as well as regularly provoking South Korea and America.

Over the years Beijing allowed a steady tightening of UN sanctions, but refused to impose potentially crippling economic restrictions. The PRC sometimes temporarily halted oil shipments to demonstrate its displeasure with North Korean policy and the relationship has grown rather frosty, especially after Kim Jong-un’s ascension.<sup>37</sup> Still, trade greatly expanded during that same period. Significant Chinese investment is planned for special economic zones as well as communication and transportation infrastructure, though follow-through has been inconsistent.

In recent years, Pyongyang’s behavior has triggered debate in China over the PRC’s relations with the North in academia, think tanks, media, and even government.<sup>38</sup> Younger Chinese are more willing to disengage from the North and accept reunification dominated by the South.<sup>39</sup> Scholars seem politely but increasingly skeptical of the North’s value to the PRC. Polls find the Chinese people have grown more hostile to Pyongyang, and especially its hereditary succession.<sup>40</sup>

Chinese language media sometimes run stories critical of the North which do not appear in English-language versions.<sup>41</sup> After Kim Jong-il’s death many Chinese people criticized Beijing’s continuing support for the DPRK.<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, the *Financial Times* found that North Koreans appeared to bear equally “deep

“China believes the status quo is better than the likely alternatives. The Kim regime is troublesome, but too important to be allowed to fail.”

“In early 2016, the PRC strengthened sanctions enforcement, but not enough to cause Pyongyang to change its policies.”

animosity” toward the Chinese.<sup>43</sup> The relationship barely qualifies as a friendship.

Given these tensions, U.S. officials have spoken hopefully about their latest conversations with the Chinese government. Yet Beijing’s official relations with the North remain largely unchanged. Michael D. Swaine of the Carnegie Endowment explained: “Indications of authoritative changes in the Chinese government stance toward the North Korea problem have consisted almost exclusively of sometimes subtle, sometimes obvious bilateral or multilateral diplomatic moves as well as changes in wording (or the omission of key words or phrases) in *official* statements.”<sup>44</sup>

Three years ago Lee Jong-heon of the Asia Future Institute in Seoul argued: “While a big change in policy is not yet apparent, hints of subtle adjustments are visible.”<sup>45</sup> A year later Kurt Campbell, former assistant secretary of state for Asian and Pacific affairs, contended: “There is a subtle shift in Chinese foreign policy. Over the short to medium term, that has the potential to affect the calculus in North East Asia.”<sup>46</sup>

Nothing much has happened since then, however, despite sporadic enforcement actions. Fudan University’s Cai Jian observes: “A lot of people want to change the policy, but the traditional school is winning.”<sup>47</sup>

Of late China appears to have sent a decidedly mixed message. By many accounts Beijing has grown frustrated with North Korean military provocations and economic failures. President Xi Jinping and his top foreign policy officials appeared more willing to take a more aggressive approach toward the North.<sup>48</sup> Xi has yet to meet Kim, while the former has seen South Korean President Park Geun-hye six times, including at last year’s World War II victory parade.

Moreover, after North Korea’s nuclear and missile tests in early 2016, China backed tighter sanctions. Foreign Minister Wang Yi supported the new UN sanctions resolution “so that North Korea will pay the necessary price and show there are consequences for its behavior.”<sup>49</sup> The PRC then strengthened

sanctions enforcement, but not enough to cause Pyongyang to change its policies. In March Foreign Minister Wang Yi emphasized that “comprehensive action” was necessary to settle the problem: “Blind faith in sanctions and pressure, actually, are not a responsible approach for the future of the Korean peninsula.”<sup>50</sup>

Beijing also criticized Washington’s unilateral financial restrictions. “We consistently oppose imposing unilateral sanctions on other countries based on one’s domestic laws,” asserted a foreign ministry spokeswoman.<sup>51</sup> China’s embassy spokesman in Washington insisted that “unilateral sanctions must not affect and harm the legitimate rights and interests of China.” Also, the parties should “avoid any move that may further aggravate tensions” on the peninsula.<sup>52</sup>

As Lee Ki-Hyun of the Korean Institute for National Unification observed: “Some analysts thought of China’s strong criticism and statements toward North Korea as a shift in China’s policy toward it, but it is hard to say that there was a significant shift in the basic principle of Beijing maintaining its relationship with Pyongyang in the long-run.”<sup>53</sup> The previous foreign minister, Yang Jiechi, said much the same during a similar episode three years ago: “The support for tougher UN sanctions against North Korea should not be interpreted as a basic change in China’s attitude.”<sup>54</sup>

A defiant Pyongyang sent an envoy in early June to tell Chinese officials that his government’s commitment to the nuclear program was “permanent.”<sup>55</sup> President Xi unexpectedly met with him, noting that the PRC “attached great importance to developing a friendly relationship with North Korea.”<sup>56</sup> While that did not indicate that all was forgiven—no summit invitation has yet been extended to Kim—Xi’s response seemed surprisingly conciliatory.

Other events also might be moving Beijing back toward the North. China criticized America’s unilateral imposition of economic sanctions on Kim and his aides to punish them for human rights violations, an issue dismissed by the PRC for the obvious reason that it is a major human rights abuser. A Chinese government

spokesman criticized unilateral penalties and the “damage to the legitimate and lawful rights and interests of another country.”<sup>57</sup>

More serious was Beijing’s adverse reaction to South Korea’s participation in America’s proposed Terminal High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system. Some observers argued that “punishing” the PRC for failing to confront the North would make the former more cooperative. However, China might have been more receptive to recent allied entreaties in hopes of convincing Seoul not to join. The PRC now appears to be ever so modestly reaffirming its relationship with the DPRK. There even is talk that China, which accounts for a quarter of South Korean exports, might retaliate economically against the South.<sup>58</sup>

So far the PRC appears to have imposed only easily reversible penalties that do not threaten the DPRK’s survival. They are causing economic pain, but not enough to affect Pyongyang’s behavior. Beijing has freely admitted its limited objectives. When China went along with an earlier round of UN controls, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi observed: “We have always believed that sanctions are not the end of the Security Council’s actions, nor are they the way to fundamentally resolve the issues in question.”<sup>59</sup> Current foreign minister Wang Yi explained that “China is serious” about allowing neither chaos nor conflict on the Korean peninsula.<sup>60</sup> So long as that commitment trumps denuclearization, nothing will change.

## CONVINCING CHINA TO DO MORE

Some in Washington believe the solution is to shout louder at the Chinese. For instance, Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) opined that “we need to be clearer with China as to what our expectations are, because this is a danger to them.”<sup>61</sup> Yet there’s no evidence that they fail to understand “our expectations.” The Chinese simply aren’t willing to fulfill America’s goals; Beijing doesn’t believe doing so is in its interest.

Others proposed to threaten Beijing. Sen. McCain once advocated that Washington make the PRC’s stance toward the North a “defining issue in our relations with China.”<sup>62</sup> Donald Trump claimed that “we have total control over China, if we had people who knew what they were doing. . . . We have China because of trade,” suggesting that he would use those ties to “put pressure on China to solve the problem.”<sup>63</sup> *Forbes* online columnist Anders Corr advocated that Washington sanction the PRC for its support for the North.<sup>64</sup>

Yet China almost certainly would defy such efforts. Advocating surrender to Washington on an issue of national importance would win few political points in Beijing, especially during a time of economic and political stress. Indeed, resisting foreign dictates would likely unite the entire leadership behind Xi.

Coerced compliance from such tactics could be equally costly for the United States. Beijing would be less likely to accept Korean reunification, perhaps intervening more directly to sustain a friendly DPRK. And the U.S.-China relationship would risk severe damage. Cooperation on a range of security, economic, and political issues would suffer. Washington would face a far more antagonistic PRC, forever muttering “never again,” arming to reduce U.S. leverage, and determined to win the next bilateral showdown.

Thus, Washington should negotiate, not dictate. America and its allies must convince the PRC leadership that they are better served by working with the United States, South Korea, and Japan against North Korea.

The sale will not be easy. As noted earlier, the DPRK is not a normal country for China. Observed Professor Wang Xinheng of Peking University, “There are more actors involved in the process of policymaking on North Korea largely because of the special relations between the two nations which stem from their deep historic bond and ideological alliance.”<sup>65</sup> In fact, the Communist Party and People’s Liberation Army may play a more important role than the foreign ministry in dealing with Pyongyang.

“So far the PRC appears to have imposed only easily reversible penalties that do not threaten the DPRK’s survival.”

“Pyongyang has long ignored counsel from its large neighbor regarding economic reform, nuclear weapons, and military brinkmanship.”

That complex bilateral relationship means parties on the Chinese side are more willing to make allowances for the North, to treat it “as China’s unruly little communist brother,” according to Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt of the International Crisis Group.<sup>66</sup> Chinese officials may trust the North to eventually do the right thing, which in turn makes Beijing less willing to sacrifice North Korea, especially to the PRC’s greatest rivals, America and Japan.

Nevertheless, many U.S. observers believe Beijing can dictate to the DPRK. Sen. John McCain argues: “If the Chinese wanted them to act in a responsible way and move forward towards a democratic, unified Korean peninsula, they could do that. Instead, the Chinese continue to prop them up.”<sup>67</sup> Indeed, “They could bring the North Korean economy to their knees if they wanted to.”<sup>68</sup> Trump’s views were similar: “China has control—absolute control—of North Korea. They don’t say it, but they do, and they should make that problem disappear.”<sup>69</sup>

Unfortunately, that is wishful thinking. The PRC–North Korean marriage is primarily one of convenience. The North always has fiercely protected its independence from all comers, including—and, given their geographic closeness, especially—China. As Mitchell Lerner has noted, materials collected by the North Korea International Documentation Project indicated “that throughout the past half-century, the DPRK leadership has firmly and consistently resisted Chinese efforts to influence their policymaking.”<sup>70</sup> Wang Jiarui, minister of the Chinese Communist Party’s International Department, downplayed China’s role: “The U.S. should not assume the DPRK will listen to China on all issues. The DPRK is an independent country.”<sup>71</sup> North Korean officials have sometimes indicated their desire to put distance between Pyongyang and Beijing, even to employ the United States as a counterweight.<sup>72</sup> The DPRK is anything but a puppet of China.

That should be obvious. Pyongyang has long ignored counsel from its large neighbor regarding economic reform, nuclear weapons, and military brinkmanship. Wu Dawei,

China’s top diplomat regarding the North Korean nuclear issue, recently complained that Beijing’s admonitions “go through one ear and out the other ear” of the North.<sup>73</sup>

To get North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons, the PRC would have to employ coercion. Most extreme was a proposal floated in the op ed pages of the *Wall Street Journal* that *China invade the North*.<sup>74</sup> However, Beijing would never provoke the conflict and chaos that it fears. Perhaps the PRC could covertly influence Pyongyang, forcing or at least influencing personnel change in the North Korean capital. That might be what Trump meant when he said “I would get China to make that guy disappear in one form or another very quickly.”<sup>75</sup> But the result of such shadow warfare is impossible to predict.

Most observers focus on Beijing’s economic leverage. For instance, the PRC could vigorously enforce international sanctions. Marcus Noland and Stephen Haggard of the Peterson Institute for International Economics contended: “Beijing is the key actor with regard to all the banking and transshipping issues. . . . It could seriously disrupt, if not end, North Korea’s proliferation activities.”<sup>76</sup>

China also could limit or end trade with the North, as well as energy and food assistance. That would minimize the regime’s access to hard currency, shrink economic activity, cut luxuries for the elite, and potentially leave the land even more dark and hungry. While Kim Jong-un and his closest associates might not end up freezing and starving, many other North Koreans might suffer that fate.

The PRC could halt indirect forms of support for Pyongyang as well. For instance, Beijing has repatriated tens of thousands of North Korean refugees, who suffer a brutal fate back “home.” *Washington Post* columnist Anne Applebaum even suggested that “China could open its 800-mile border with North Korea. The resulting exodus would surely do for North Korea what the collapse of the Berlin Wall did for East Germany.”<sup>77</sup>

These steps would put the entire North Korean system at risk. Even if the PRC did



its worst, however, few Chinese policymakers appear to believe that Pyongyang would quickly cave. As noted earlier, North Korea's elite has demonstrated a high tolerance for hardship afflicting the rest of the population: a half million or more people starved to death in the late 1990s. Moreover, Kim Jong-un may see his survival resting on the nuclear program—including sustaining popular prestige, reinforcing anti-American propaganda, and preserving military support—in which case no amount of economic pressure could convince him to give it up. Some Chinese even fear that the North would strike out. Kim and his colleagues might undertake a provocative course designed to destabilize the peninsula to remind Beijing of the price it would pay if chaos enveloped the North.

## MAKING THE CASE TO CHINA

Still, pressure from the PRC appears to offer the best hope for changing leadership, policy, or both in Pyongyang. To make the best case, the United States first would need to smooth often difficult relations with Beijing. As Bonnie Glaser and Brittany Billingsley have noted: “Beijing must be confident that the United States is not seeking to undermine China’s stability and contain its rise; otherwise, it will not only refuse to partner with the United States but may instead increase efforts to shield Pyongyang from international penalties in response to provocations.”<sup>78</sup>

There are other important reasons to improve bilateral relations, of course. But the United States is not likely to win significant concessions regarding the DPRK if Washington and Beijing are at loggerheads on other issues, especially security. Bilateral confrontations elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific will make Beijing less likely to ease tensions for America in Korea. Moreover, even if a deal looked feasible, would China trust the United States to implement an agreement?<sup>79</sup> After all, China sees Washington as having broken its promise not to expand NATO to Russia’s borders and violated the denuclearization deal

reached with Libya, promoting regime change at the first opportunity.

Equally important, Washington must speak to China’s interests. Sen. McCain complained “It’s hard to know why China doesn’t push harder.”<sup>80</sup> Actually, anyone with even a superficial knowledge of the region understands Beijing’s position. Only by addressing the PRC’s specific concerns can American officials hope to convince Beijing to, in effect, switch sides.

President Xi once indicated that the PRC’s priorities were “no war, no instability, no nukes.”<sup>81</sup> That reflected Beijing’s long-standing approach to the Korean peninsula.<sup>82</sup> The order is instructive: in China’s view, the worst contingency would be war, next would be a DPRK collapse. A nuclear North is to be discouraged, but is less feared than contingencies that could be created by the policies necessary to force denuclearization. America must seek to change that assessment.

As it stands, China supports North Korea for several very practical reasons.

## Thwart U.S. Domination

First, the DPRK impedes U.S. policy in East Asia. North Korea complicates American military planning, threatening Washington’s leading military allies, South Korea and Japan, and causing them to divert resources that otherwise might be directed at China. Geographically the North creates a buffer, which the PRC fought hard, losing hundreds of thousands killed, to preserve more than six decades ago.

According to Lee Dong-jun of Korea University, “Beijing has suspected that the U.S. is using the North Korean threat as a pretext to bring its military power to China’s doorstep.”<sup>83</sup> Ground forces might not seem important in a world of nuclear-tipped missiles and well-armed carrier groups, but Korean unification, noted Cai Jian of Fudan University, would “put an American military alliance on the doorstep of China.” U.S. troops bordering the PRC would pose an even more potent symbolic affront.

“Kim Jong-un may see his survival resting on the nuclear program, in which case no amount of economic pressure could convince him to give it up.”

“Beijing is more interested in avoiding conflict than promoting development on the Korean peninsula.”

### Prevent China's Containment

China also would see a united Korea allied with America as strengthening Washington's attempted encirclement. U.S. troops could end up on the Yalu, and additional bases would be available for use by American naval and air forces. The PRC proved its sensitivity to intelligence gathering during the confrontation over America's downed EP-3, a signals reconnaissance airplane, in April 2001. It similarly objected to the voyage of the Navy's USNS Impeccable within China's Exclusive Economic Zone near Hainan Island in March 2009.<sup>84</sup>

Washington's post-Cold War policy of expanding NATO up to Russia's border likely unsettles Beijing. As Andrew Kydd at the University of Wisconsin-Madison notes, “China reasonably expects that the United States will do the same in any scenario involving Korean reunification.”<sup>85</sup> The North might do little for China, but at least it is not working *against* Beijing.

### Diplomatic Clout with Washington and its Allies

Moreover, an independent North Korea creates a constant need for Beijing's assistance. The United States and South Korea, in particular, regularly request the PRC to use its influence in Pyongyang. That provides China with a bargaining chip. Indeed, Beijing gains leverage simply by appearing to “deliver” the Kim regime to, say, the Six-Party Talks, even if no meaningful agreement results.

### Competition with the PRC

A united Korea would share regional influence with China. Perhaps most worrisome to Beijing, the ROK might attract ethnic Korean Chinese citizens. Andrei Lankov notes that “quasi-official territorial claims, frequently voiced in Seoul, do not help quell these worries, either.”<sup>86</sup> In fact, some South Koreans, including members of the National Assembly, claim the territory of Kando, located in China's Jilin Province. They advocate voiding the 1909 treaty defining the two nations' boundary.

Further, a united Korea that inherited the North's nuclear arsenal—a possibility discussed in the ROK—would acquire outsized regional influence. A single Korea also could allow an expanded missile defense system seen as undermining Beijing's security.<sup>87</sup> Even worse would be a unified Korea working with Japan, despite past tensions, as well as America.

### Economic Benefits

The PRC has gained significant economic advantages in the North, with minerals making up an increasing share of DPRK exports.<sup>88</sup> China has pressed forward with several investment zones, private as well as public. These ties have made the DPRK highly dependent economically on China.<sup>89</sup> In fact, the South's closure in February 2016 of the joint ROK-North Korea Kaesong Industrial Complex, which had employed over 50,000 North Korean workers near the DMZ, increased Pyongyang's reliance on the PRC.<sup>90</sup> Some observers argue that the latter is essentially “taking over” the North Korean economy.<sup>91</sup>

### Regional Stability

Beijing is more interested in avoiding conflict than promoting development on the Korean peninsula. The existing North Korean state is troublesome enough; disintegration, chaos, and conflict could be far worse. One can only speculate as to the likely consequences, but they almost certainly would be awful.<sup>92</sup> And they probably would not be contained within the North's territory.

“The Chinese are most concerned about the collapse of North Korea leading to chaos on the border,” argues Adam Segal of the Council of Foreign Relations.<sup>93</sup> Hundreds of thousands or millions of starving refugees could head across the Yalu, resulting in high economic, social, and political costs. The PRC has suffered through large-scale refugee flows in the past. According to Scott Snyder of the Council on Foreign Relations, such episodes “fixed the attention of Chinese policymakers in northeastern China on the political risks associated with a possible decline in economic

and political stability in North Korea.”<sup>94</sup> An influx of ethnic Koreans also might ignite Korean nationalism and irredentism and other problems between China and a united Korea.<sup>95</sup> Ethnic Koreans living in China today appear to identify more with the PRC than North Korea.<sup>96</sup> However, a united and free Korea might be more attractive to them.

Moreover, collapse could be violent, with conflict spilling over the Yalu. Gregory J. Moore of the University of Nottingham observes: “Beijing does not fancy the notion of North Korea as a Northeast Asian version of present-day Somalia, the pre-2001 Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, or China itself during its own Warring States Period.”<sup>97</sup> The PRC might feel the need to send in its military to restore order or even sustain a friendly regime. At the same time, the United States and South Korea might be tempted to intervene—to secure loose nukes, provide aid, impose order, hasten reunification, or forestall Chinese action. That could yield a dangerous confrontation.

### Political Influence in North Korea

Finally, a failed attempt to coerce Pyongyang likely would permanently damage Beijing’s relationship with the North’s current leadership. An actively hostile DPRK would be even more unruly. Some Chinese even fear Pyongyang directing its nuclear weapons northward.<sup>98</sup> Zhu Feng of Peking University warns: “If North Korea can threaten the U.S. with nuclear weapons today, it can surely blackmail China with its nuclear arsenal in the future.”<sup>99</sup>

Given that list of horrors, supporting the DPRK looks like the best of a set of bad options.

### U.S. NEGOTIATING STRATEGY

To win China’s cooperation, the United States must convince the Chinese leadership that, despite the preceding considerations, the PRC is better served working with America, South Korea, and Japan against North Korea. Beijing will have to believe that it would be more secure and prosperous even if the attempt to change the North failed and

the result was regime collapse. The allies must do more than tout the benefits of denuclearization. They must directly address the PRC’s geopolitical concerns.

Lee Ki-Hyun of the Korea Institute for National Unification argues that ever since North Korea’s second nuclear test in 2009, “China decided to differentiate the North Korean nuclear issue from the North Korean issue as a whole and set its focus on the latter. In other words, as the North Korean nuclear problem has intensified, China has pushed it back and deemed it less important.”<sup>100</sup> The United States must convince the PRC that the two matters cannot be separated.

Washington’s objective should be to convince Beijing to use its clout to alter the North’s policies of nuclear expansion and reckless confrontation. That might require a leadership (less fearsome than regime) change, though the personalities matter less than the policies. The overriding objective would be reducing the security threat posed by the North, rather than promoting democracy and reunification, which the PRC would not likely favor.

First, the United States should work with Seoul and Tokyo to develop a comprehensive offer for the North. Many Chinese policymakers continue to blame Washington and its allies for threatening North Korea’s security, thereby spurring the latter to develop nuclear weapons. Chinese officials believe allied demands for regime change reinforce Pyongyang’s behavior.

For instance, Wang Jiarui of China’s International Department forthrightly criticized the United States and South Korea for contributing to increased tensions through such policies as regular military maneuvers: if “the U.S. continues to refuse to talk [to the North], then it cannot want China to assume more responsibility.”<sup>101</sup> Earlier this year the Foreign Ministry dismissed criticism of China: “The origin and crux of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula has never been China. The key to solving the problem is not China.”<sup>102</sup> It is America and its allies, in Beijing’s view.

“Washington’s objective should be to convince Beijing to use its clout to alter the North’s policies of nuclear expansion and reckless confrontation.”

“The situation today is volatile, not stable, and could lead to just the sort of chaos and violence Beijing fears.”

Similarly, China's semi-official *Global Times* pointedly observed: “The U.S., South Korea and Japan should abandon fantasies of coercing Pyongyang through sanctions. They should make efforts to ease North Korea's sense of strategic insecurity.”<sup>103</sup> After the latest nuclear test, the Chinese foreign ministry urged the United States and the North to communicate and negotiate, and “explore ways to resolve each other's reasonable concerns.”<sup>104</sup>

Hui Zhang of Harvard University put it another way: “while China is prepared to support larger sticks, a resolution to the crisis must also include larger carrots to North Korea: a package deal that includes reliable security guarantees.”<sup>105</sup> The difference in approaches is subtle but critical. The PRC wants Washington to offer a peace treaty/security guarantee to create an environment conducive to denuclearization rather than as a reward for denuclearization. Developing an engagement deal would help bridge the gap between Washington and Beijing and, in the words of Bonnie Glaser and Brittany Billingsley, “demonstrate U.S. sincerity.”<sup>106</sup>

The resulting offer should be a joint allied product and include a peace treaty, diplomatic recognition, end of sanctions, participation in international agencies and forums, economic aid, removal of U.S. troops from the South, increased inter-Korean contacts, and discussion of reunification. In return, the North would agree to supervised denuclearization and reduction in conventional military tensions. A dialogue over human rights would follow as part of the new relationship.

The allies then should present their proposal to the PRC, seeking its endorsement and full support in negotiations, whether bilateral, or through renewed Six-Party Talks or other forums. Beijing should insist that the North agree to denuclearization, and if it balks, sanction Pyongyang for failing to accept a proposal that China views as fair. The PRC's objective would be not just getting the North to the table, but implementing a meaningful agreement.

Gideon Rachman complained that a security commitment—“guaranteeing the regime's survival in return for nuclear

disarmament”—would be impossible, since its survival could not be ensured, and immoral, “given the regime's murderous nature.”<sup>107</sup> However, as a practical matter, current U.S. policy accepts the regime's survival without nuclear disarmament. The promise should be against outside intervention, including by the United States, and would be justified if negotiations resulted in the removal of the North's nuclear weapons. A leadership willing to make peace might be more likely to eventually change in other ways.

Of course, Pyongyang could say no even to a generous package. However, such a refusal would further U.S. objectives by shifting blame onto the North. Then the United States could attempt to convince Beijing that the status quo is more dangerous than pressing the North to reform. The situation today is volatile, not stable, and could lead to just the sort of chaos and violence Beijing fears. Furthermore, Washington should detail as clearly as possible how the status quo, already inimical to Chinese interests, is likely to get worse. DPRK provocations are likely to continue, creating a risk of war on the peninsula and encouraging rearmament throughout the region. Under the current circumstances, it would be better for Beijing to act preemptively if Pyongyang refuses to be reasonable.

War could easily erupt from a simple miscalculation or mistake. China has good reason to distrust the North's current leadership. If war broke out, the United States and its allies would not stop at the DMZ. Watching the conquest of its nominal ally would be humiliating and the fighting might overflow North Korea's border into the PRC.

China also has good reason to fear a U.S.-initiated war. Washington previously considered launching a preventive war, at least to strike the DPRK's nuclear facilities. You Ji of the University of New South Wales pointed out that one site is just 20 km from the Chinese border, so “a surgical strike against this nuclear site would unleash nuclear pollutants to Chinese territories.”<sup>108</sup> Beijing also is aware of America's willingness to intervene

in such nations as Serbia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya.

North Korea's provocations have already spurred allied military preparations that indirectly affect the PRC. The Obama administration has strengthened its military links with both South Korea and Japan and warned Beijing of America's readiness to deploy additional forces to deter Pyongyang.<sup>109</sup> In April 2013 Secretary Kerry pointed to expanded missile defenses in Guam and Japan as a "direct response to the fact that American interests and American territory" were threatened by the North.<sup>110</sup> The recent decision to deploy the THAAD system to South Korea is also clearly a response to North Korea's behavior.

An aggressive and unpredictable DPRK has been one of the reasons Japan has augmented its military forces, expanded their responsibilities, and debated revising its pacifist constitution. Tokyo also is considering developing nonnuclear weapons capable of striking the North to preempt a missile launch against Japan.<sup>111</sup> Developments in Pyongyang have even led to talk of Japan and South Korea developing nuclear weapons. The U.S. could decide that regional deterrence is a better policy than maintaining an American nuclear umbrella.<sup>112</sup> As discussed later, such a prospect would greatly disturb Beijing but might encourage China to do more.

Finally, chaos and violence lurk beneath the surface in the North. The regime could turn out to be as brittle as Romania's Ceausescu regime, which ended with an ad hoc firing squad on Christmas Day 1989. The very implosion Beijing fears might occur if it doesn't act.

## SHARED RESPONSE TO A NORTH KOREAN CRISIS

Still, Washington should acknowledge the risks of pressing the North—most obviously regime collapse if the PRC pulls the economic plug—and commit, along with South Korea and Japan, to share the cost with China. Sue Mi Terry at Columbia University cheerfully urged the relevant parties to "promote reunification"

and not fear destabilizing North Korea: "Even if the North were to implode now, that would be preferable to allowing the state to limp along."<sup>113</sup> However, China cannot treat the possibility of chaos and conflict on its border so lightly. The United States, South Korea, and Japan should offer financial assistance during the transition, including helping care for refugees. (Similar commitments should be sought from international agencies and non-governmental organizations.)

Moreover, allied governments should indicate their willingness to accept temporary Chinese military intervention as a defensive measure should the DPRK state collapse. Foreign Minister Wang Yi recently said that "As the largest neighboring country of the peninsula, China will not sit idly by and watch stability on the peninsula be destroyed on a basic level."<sup>114</sup> The PRC is thought to be prepared to act in service of goals ranging from securing nuclear facilities to providing humanitarian assistance.<sup>115</sup> The allies and Beijing should discuss possible contingencies and respective responsibilities, including strategies to avoid a potentially dangerous confrontation in the midst of chaos and conflict.

Some analysts propose U.S. military intervention in such circumstances.<sup>116</sup> Bonnie Glaser of the Center for Strategic and International Studies even envisions "a need for U.S. forces to be north of the 38th parallel for some time."<sup>117</sup> However, the possibility of an extended U.S. military presence there would likely impel China to intervene if the North Korean state faltered. Best would be to keep American forces out.

In any case, China might be tempted to hold onto whatever it acquired. Victor Cha, who served on the National Security Council under George W. Bush, argued that the PRC is likely to "effectively adopt it as a province" rather than "shed North Korea."<sup>118</sup> Similarly, Andrew Kydd of the University of Wisconsin-Madison suggested that Beijing's objective "would be an obedient buffer state/protectorate that secures the Chinese frontier."<sup>119</sup>

However, Korean nationalism might deter such an attempt. Violent resistance to any

“North Korea’s provocations have already spurred allied military preparations that indirectly affect the PRC.”

“Washington should make clear its intention to disengage militarily once the Korean problem is solved.”

outside intervention is possible if not likely; under no circumstances can North Koreans be expected to become obedient puppets.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, an advance understanding with the allies might limit Chinese ambitions. Finally, from an allied standpoint, creation of a Chinese satellite in the North still might be better than preserving the existing regime with its nuclear arsenal.

To encourage eventual unification and discourage a Chinese land grab, the United States and the ROK should pledge not to take geopolitical advantage of China—in essence, to guarantee that the PRC would not paradoxically lose the geopolitical chess game by checkmating the North Korean king. That will require allaying Chinese fears of U.S. containment.

So far there have been many proposals for half-measures. Secretary Kerry indicated that America could reduce its Pacific presence if the North Korea problem was solved.<sup>121</sup> Andrei Lankov, who studied in the North and now teaches in the South, suggested a joint U.S.-South Korean “statement promising that upon unification no U.S. forces and/or U.S. military installations will ever be located north of the present-day DMZ area.”<sup>122</sup> Glaser and Billingsley similarly urged a pledge to keep American forces away from the Yalu.

However, such geographic separation would mean little if Korea was reunified. American forces could rapidly move to the Chinese border and beyond in any conflict. Moreover, a shift of South Korea’s military northward could open up additional bases in the South that could back U.S. operations elsewhere in East Asia. The PRC’s concerns may not be assuaged by limited offers.

Washington should make clear its intention to disengage militarily once the Korean problem is solved. The United States should pledge, in the event of reunification, to terminate its mutual defense treaty with Seoul and bring American troops home.<sup>123</sup> Voluntarily beginning to withdraw now would help convince Beijing that Washington was serious and could be trusted to fulfill its commitment.

An American departure would free the South to negotiate with Beijing over the details of reunification. Despite his nation’s alliance with the United States, Park Chang Kwoun of the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses advocated “properly managing the rivalry between the two superpowers [the United States and China] to [Seoul’s] advantage.”<sup>124</sup> Previously, ROK analysts have argued that “South Korea should be particularly careful not to let its alliance with the U.S. target China.”<sup>125</sup> Some South Koreans argue that Seoul should look to regional multilateral mechanisms for its security.<sup>126</sup> Former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski opined “At the very minimum, China would insist that a reunited Korea be a nonaligned buffer between China and Japan and would also expect that the historically rooted Korean animosity toward Japan would of itself draw Korea into the Chinese sphere of influence.”<sup>127</sup> The United States should accept any geopolitical arrangement that promotes peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

Seoul also should promise to respect significant Chinese economic interests. For instance, Beijing reportedly purchased fishing rights from the DPRK for this year.<sup>128</sup> Admittedly, rewarding those who profited from dealing with the Kim clan would be painful. Nevertheless, the overriding objective should be to convince China to cooperate against Pyongyang.

Moreover, the South should emphasize that the PRC is likely to gain much more economically from a vastly more productive North Korea reunited with the South. While today China accounts for 70 percent of the North’s trade, the DPRK accounts for less than 1 percent of China’s trade, leaving significant room for growth. Chinese firms also find dealing with Pyongyang to be extremely difficult.<sup>129</sup>

Reunification would dramatically increase economic activity, commensurately expanding Chinese commercial opportunities.<sup>130</sup> Although the PRC’s share of trade in the north would fall, its total trade throughout the peninsula would increase dramatically. A bilateral free trade agreement, already under discussion, would have even greater benefits.

There is a strong case for the PRC to deal with the North Korea problem, and other influential regional states, such as Australia, Indonesia, and Singapore could reinforce that message. These Asian powers should emphasize that responsible PRC action would help ease concern over Beijing's increasing assertiveness in regional territorial disputes. European nations also could emphasize Beijing's potential for global leadership. Does the PRC believe that it deserves a say on the international stage equal to its growing economic and military power? Helping to solve the North Korea problem would be a strong argument in its favor. "The Chinese could begin to play a valuable and prominent international role right now," argued *Washington Post* columnist Anne Applebaum, "by eliminating one of the region's most serious potential conflicts."<sup>131</sup>

### IF CHINA REFUSES TO ACT

The PRC, as well as North Korea, could say no. That would leave the status quo essentially undisturbed. In that case, Glaser and Billingsley suggested that the United States and its allies penalize Beijing, ensuring "that severe negative consequences result from China's decision to stick to its current policy." In particular, the two analysts urged expanding U.S. military activities, which they hoped "over time may compel Chinese leaders to change their cost-benefit calculations in favor of greater cooperation."<sup>132</sup>

Such a policy would be counterproductive. Glaser and Billingsley explained that their strategy "would not be aimed at increasing the security threat to China," but instead "would inevitably have a negative impact on Chinese security."<sup>133</sup> Beijing might not recognize the fine distinction between U.S. actions intended to undermine the PRC and actions that merely have that effect. As a rising nationalistic power, China seems more likely to balk than capitulate to outside pressure. Undermining its security is more likely to generate an in-kind response than concessions. As noted earlier, that appears to be Beijing's initial

reaction to the planned THAAD deployment in South Korea.

Rather than threaten China, the United States should point out how North Korea's current policies worsen the PRC's security situation. North Korea can be expected to continue its provocative course. In desperation the regime might take additional risky steps, such as engaging in nuclear proliferation to non-state actors, which could spark U.S. military action. The countries most directly threatened, South Korea and Japan, are likely to continue expanding their own military capabilities and cooperating with the United States in ways unsettling to Beijing, such as participating in the THAAD missile defense.

If the PRC still refuses to help, the United States should go one dramatic step further. Beijing appears to believe that Washington will protect the PRC from the worst consequences of its actions. Today the United States is committed to preventing nuclear proliferation to Northeast Asia's "good guys," i.e. America's allies, which in practice leaves nuclear weapons only in the hands of the "bad guys" (e.g., Russia, China, and North Korea). By preventing the consequence of Pyongyang's nuclear program that the PRC likely most fears—a Japanese nuclear bomb—Washington has reduced the cost of Beijing's appeasement of the DPRK.

Hao Yufan of the University of Macau cited the PRC's concern over "the potential spread of nuclear weapons to Japan, South Korea, and ultimately to Taiwan. China takes these possible developments very seriously."<sup>134</sup> President George W. Bush is said to have warned Beijing that Japan could take such an action. Three years ago David Ignatius of the *Washington Post* claimed that U.S. officials believed Beijing had toughened its position toward North Korea out of fear of that possibility, as well as other considerations.<sup>135</sup>

However, China obviously is not concerned enough. That is not surprising. Since Washington both maintains a nuclear umbrella over Japan and South Korea, and insists that they forswear nuclear weapons, such threats that they might go nuclear lack force.

“As a rising nationalistic power, China seems more likely to balk than capitulate to outside pressure.”

“U.S. officials should indicate that if North Korea continues to expand its atomic arsenal, they will reconsider their opposition to South Korea’s and Japan’s acquisition of countervailing weapons.”

Strong U.S. pressure backed by a promise to shelter South Korea under the U.S. nuclear umbrella caused President Park Chung-hee to abandon the ROK’s incipient nuclear program a half century ago. After the North’s 2006 nuclear test, ROK defense minister Yoon Kwang-ung announced: “Due to public anxiety, I have stressed the need for a nuclear umbrella from the U.S.”<sup>136</sup> U.S. policy similarly discourages serious consideration of the nuclear option by Tokyo, although strong opposition to such weapons among the Japanese public also plays a major role.

The DPRK and China count on U.S. policy to discourage potential adversaries from acquiring their own deterrent capabilities. Richard Weitz of the Hudson Institute observed: “the expectation, in Beijing and elsewhere, is that none of these countries would make the controversial decision to pursue their own nuclear deterrents as long as they felt reassured that the United States will protect them.”<sup>137</sup>

U.S. officials should indicate that if North Korea continues to expand its atomic arsenal, they will reconsider their opposition to South Korea’s and Japan’s acquisition of countervailing weapons. In Washington’s view, it is not obviously in America’s interest to remain permanently ensnared in such a dangerous nuclear tangle. If nuclear weapons spread, North Korea would become a shared nightmare with China. Such a policy obviously would be controversial, but is gaining attention as an option. For instance, in March 2013 the *New York Times* ran a special online forum debating the question “Nuclear Neighbors for North Korea?”<sup>138</sup>

There long have been advocates of “going nuclear” in both South Korea and Japan. North Korea’s provocations appear to have increased support for such a controversial idea. In the ROK, for instance, legislators, analysts, and citizens alike have urged consideration of the nuclear option.<sup>139</sup> A poll from the Asan Institute found that two thirds of South Koreans favored the development of nuclear weapons to deter the North. The Institute’s board chairman M. J. Chung—a long-time member of the ROK National Assembly and one-time presidential

candidate—told the 2013 Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference “We need to put all the options on the table.”<sup>140</sup> Members of the ruling Saenuri Party called for the South to create its own nuclear deterrent.<sup>141</sup> The discussion has become loud enough to draw attention from U.S. observers.<sup>142</sup>

The possibility would be more controversial in Japan, but it would be reluctant to lag far behind the ROK. Despite significant public resistance to the idea of becoming a nuclear power, Japanese government officials as well as political commentators have occasionally proposed developing nuclear weapons. A decade ago, opposition leader Ichiro Ozawa and Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda discussed the possibility of doing so.<sup>143</sup> In 2006, during Shinzo Abe’s previous stint as prime minister, his foreign minister called for a debate on the issue; Abe maintained a discreet silence.<sup>144</sup> In his current role, Abe has taken a more nationalistic and aggressive tone than his predecessors, and expanded the military’s authority.

Of course, the decision to go nuclear would remain with Seoul and Tokyo. But China could not ignore the possibility. Although it possesses a nuclear arsenal, Beijing has responded sharply to past speculation about its neighbors developing nuclear weapons.<sup>145</sup> Thus, Washington should emphasize that China would have to deal with the consequences if the North pushed the ROK and especially Japan over the nuclear line. The blame would be on the PRC for failing to do more to discourage North Korea’s nuclear development.

Nonproliferation advocates disdain that option. And the United States ultimately might think better of implementing its threat even if efforts to stop the North failed. There are obvious and serious downsides to proliferation. However, dealing with the DPRK is a matter of second bests. The most desirable outcome, voluntary North Korean disarmament, is also the least likely. While Seoul and Tokyo might be satisfied living under U.S. nuclear guarantees, such commitments put America at greater risk of conflict. Washington forever must worry about the latest eruptions from



Pyongyang. Even more important, Beijing's increasing territorial assertiveness could spark a regional confrontation with allied states that turned into a global nuclear stand-off. U.S. acceptance of "friendly" proliferation warrants debate and would be useful in negotiating with China on a range of other regional issues.

Thus, the issue warrants serious discussion in Washington. The difficult trade-offs should no longer simply be assumed away. At the same time, U.S. officials should use the possibility of "friendly" proliferation as a bargaining chip with China.

No doubt Beijing would be uncomfortable overturning decades of policy toward North Korea. Although the status quo is unsatisfactory, the PRC might still say no to Washington and its allies. Nevertheless, the issue is too important to avoid. And the best chance of a positive outcome is a concerted diplomatic campaign to enlist China's cooperation.

## CONCLUSION

Pyongyang and Beijing appear to be ever further at odds over the DPRK's nuclear ambitions. North Korea reaffirms its intent to remain a nuclear power while China maintains its commitment to denuclearizing the peninsula. The critical question for the PRC: Will it enforce or abandon its objective?

Gregory J. Moore of Zhejiang University contends that in recent years "a subtle but quite remarkable transformation has taken place in the relations between the two countries."<sup>146</sup> Hostility is sometimes openly expressed, but so far the change has had little practical effect on PRC proliferation policy. It is not enough for Beijing's attitude toward the North to change. China's treatment of the North must change. And that will happen only if the PRC decides to emphasize denuclearization over stability.

A policy shift of that magnitude would require a significant debate within a Chinese leadership that faces internal as well as external challenges. Convincing the PRC to reverse support for its long-time ally would

be difficult. However, making a serious and systematic case to Beijing is the best strategy among many poor alternatives. Otherwise the United States should prepare to accept the North as a de facto permanent nuclear power.

If Washington and the PRC were able to successfully collaborate in this case, new possibilities for U.S.-Chinese cooperation might open. Progress in Northeast Asia could help ease tensions elsewhere.

The Korean peninsula has reemerged as a candidate for the world's next big war. In the view of many U.S. officials and observers, the road to a stable, peaceful, denuclearized Korean Peninsula runs, however irregularly and uncertainly, through the PRC. Despite the obvious difficulty in winning Chinese assistance, the proposals outlined here offer a reasonable, and perhaps the only, chance of defusing the next North Korean crisis before it starts.

## NOTES

1. Quoted in Paul Richter, "Kerry Urges China to Keep North Korea in Check," *Los Angeles Times*, February 13, 2014.
2. Park Si-soo, "Kim Jong-un 'Exceptionally Stubborn, not a Good Listener': CIA," *Korea Times*, July 1, 2016, [https://koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2016/07/485\\_208377.html](https://koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2016/07/485_208377.html).
3. Anna Fifield, "South Korea: Execution Is Latest Sign of Crisis in North," *Washington Post*, September 1, 2016.
4. The interest in economic development obviously is serious, and a significant portion of the economy is in quasi-private hands, but the possibility of an entrepreneurial explosion as occurred in China remains minimal. See, e.g., Charles Clover and Song Jung-a, "Pyongyang Start-Up Seminar Hints at Potential for Entrepreneurs," *Financial Times*, July 8, 2016.
5. See, e.g., Andrew H. Kydd, "Pulling the Plug: Can There Be a Deal with China on Korean

“If the North pushed the ROK and especially Japan over the nuclear line, the blame would be on the PRC for failing to do more to discourage North Korea's nuclear development.”

- Unification?" *The Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 65.
6. Although some economic reforms are occurring, no dramatic changes were announced at the recent Korean Workers' Party conference, confounding the hopes of some observers. Georgy Toloraya, "Why a North Korean Deng Xiaoping Should Not Be Expected," *NK News*, July 5, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2016/07/why-a-north-korean-deng-xiaopeng-should-not-be-expected/>.
7. Andrei Lankov, *The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 111–16, 195–96. South Korea's existence even discourages economic reform within the existing political system, as in China and Vietnam, he argues, since increasing knowledge of the ROK's success undermines the North's legitimacy. Andrei Lankov, "North Korea's Choice: Collapse or Reform," *Foreign Affairs*, December 19, 2011, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2011-12-19/north-koreas-choice-collapse-or-reform>.
8. See, e.g., Bruce Cumings, "The Kims' Three Bodies: Toward Understanding Dynastic Succession in North Korea," in Kyung-Ae Park and Scott Snyder, eds., *North Korea in Transition: Politics, Economy, and Society* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), pp. 67–90.
9. See, e.g., Andrei Lankov, "No Rush to Talk with North Korea," *New York Times*, August 9, 2009.
10. See, e.g., Andrei Lankov, "Why North Korea Sanctions Are Unlikely to Produce Desirable Results," *NK News*, August 16, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2016/08/why-north-korea-sanctions-are-unlikely-to-produce-desirable-results/>.
11. Jayshree Bajoria, "The China-North Korea Relationship," Council on Foreign Relations, October 7, 2010, <http://www.cfr.org/china/china-north-korea-relationship/p11097>.
12. Dick K. Nanto and Mark E. Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations," Congressional Research Service, December 28, 2010, 7-5700, R41043, p. 1; Dick K. Nanto, "Increasing Dependency: North Korea's Economic Relations with China," Korea Economic Institute, *Korea's Economy 2011* (Vol. 27), p. 82.
13. "China Announces Restrictions on Trade with North Korea," Reuters, April 5, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-northkorea-idUSKCN0X20U4>; Kim Seong Hwan, "China Ratchets Up North Korea Sanctions," *Daily NK*, June 20, 2016, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?num=13945&cataId=nk00400>; Josh Rogin, "Satellite Imagery Suggests China Is Secretly Punishing North Korea," *National Post*, July 4, 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/world/satellite-imagery-suggests-china-is-secretly-punishing-north-korea>; "China's Imports of N. Korean Goods Fall 12.6 pct in May," *Korea Herald*, June 22, 2016, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160622001096>; Choi Song Min, "Sanctions Drive Trading Companies to Default on Payments," *DailyNK*, June 21, 2016, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk01500&num=13953>; Thomas Byrne, "Why the New Sanctions on North Korea Might Work," *Wall Street Journal*, March 2, 2016, p. A17; "N. Korea's Food Rations for Q2 Lowest Since 2011: Report," Yonhap News Agency, August 3, 2016, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/news/2016/08/03/0200000000AEN20160803005300315.html?input=www.twitter.com>; Chad O'Carroll, "N. Korea's Only International Law Firm Suspends Operations: Reuters," *NK News*, August 1, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2016/08/n-koreas-only-international-law-firm-suspends-operations-reuters/>.
14. Leo Byrne, "North Korean Trade in Sanctioned Goods Continues with China," *NK News*, June 30, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/pro/north-korean-trade-in-sanctioned-goods-continues-with-china/>; Jane Perlez and Yufan Huang, "China Keeps Luxury Goods Flowing for North Korea," *New York Times*, February 6, 2016, pp. A4, A9; JH Ahn, "Check Individuals Visiting N. Korea for

- Sanctions Violations, U.S. Says,” *NK News*, July 5, 2016, [www.nknews.org](http://www.nknews.org); Dursun Peksen, “Why Economic Sanctions Have Failed against North Korea,” *The Diplomat*, July 8, 2016.
15. See, e.g., Elizabeth Shim, “China Border Trade with North Korea ‘Very Active’, Report Says,” UPI, August 22, 2016, [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/World-News/2016/08/22/China-border-trade-with-North-Korea-very-active-report-says/2911471871707/print](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2016/08/22/China-border-trade-with-North-Korea-very-active-report-says/2911471871707/print).
16. Leo Byrne, “China Cuts Online Access to North Korean Trade Data,” *NK News*, April 4, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2016/04/china-cuts-online-access-to-north-korean-trade-data/>.
17. Jin Qiangyi of Yanbian University argued that “China has to think about what will happen to the North Korean economy, whether there will be other problems.” Quoted in James Pearson and Ju-min Park, “Proposed North Korea Sanctions Dig Deep, Implementation Falls to China,” Reuters, February 26, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-nuclear-usa-sanctions-idUSKCN0VZ1IV>. Since Chinese enforcement traditionally has been lax, it would be simple for the PRC to return to its previous practices.
18. Doug Bandow, “Wrong War, Wrong Place, Wrong Time: Why Military Action Should Not Be Used to Resolve the North Korean Nuclear Crisis,” Cato Institute, Foreign Policy Briefing, no. 76, May 12, 2003, pp. 3-4.
19. Perry said that the administration chose not to strike, while the late South Korean president Kim Young-sam wrote that he dissuaded President Bill Clinton from launching the attack. Compare Jamie McIntyre, “Washington Was on Brink of War with North Korea 5 Years Ago,” CNN, October 4, 1999, <http://www.cnn.com/US/9910/04/korea.brink/>; with Choe Sang-hun, “Kim Young-sam, South Korean President Who Opposed Military, Dies at 87,” *New York Times*, November 21, 2015; and Hyung-Jin Kim, “Kim Young-san, South Korea’s President in the 1990s, Dies at 87,” *Washington Post*, November 22, 2015.
20. Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry, “If Necessary, Strike and Destroy,” *Washington Post*, June 22, 2006.
21. Bandow, “Wrong War,” p.7; “How North Korea Would Retaliate,” Stratfor, May 26, 2016, <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/how-north-korea-would-retaliate>. The harm would be significant, but some analysts believe it would be more limited than commonly thought. See, e.g., Roger Cavazos, “Mind the Gap Between Rhetoric and Reality,” Nautilus Institute, NAPSNet Special Reports, June 26, 2012, <http://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/mind-the-gap-between-rhetoric-and-reality/>.
22. See, e.g., Jim Michaels and Tom Vanden Brook, “North Korea Could Inflict Significant Damage in Attack,” *USA Today*, March 30, 2013; Scott Stossel, “North Korea: The War Game,” *Atlantic*, July/August 2005, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/07/north-korea-the-war-game/304029/>; Anatoly Karlin, “How a Second Korean War Will Be Fought,” *Anatoly Karlin blog*, March 28, 2010, <http://akarlin.com/2010/03/korean-war-2/>; “Simulation: War on the Korean Peninsula,” ABC News, January 14, 2007, <http://abcnews.go.com/Nightline/story?id=128509>; Jim Mann, “Scenarios for a 2nd Korean War Grim for U.S., South,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 22, 1994.
23. See, e.g., Jamie McIntyre, “The Last Korean Meltdown,” *The Daily Beast*, November 24, 2010, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2010/11/24/the-last-korean-meltdown-bill-clinton-on-the-brink-of-war.html>. Perry acknowledged that “there would be many, many tens of thousands of deaths” and “the magnitude of the damage that North Korea could do.” “Interview: Ashton Carter,” PBS, March 3, 2003, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kim/interviews/acarter.html>.
24. Mark McDonald, “North Korea Suggests Libya Should Have Kept Nuclear Program,” *New York Times*, March 24, 2011; Doug Bandow, “Thanks to Libya, North Korea Might Never

- Negotiate on Nuclear Weapons,” *The National Interest*, September 2, 2015, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/thanks-libya-north-korea-might-never-negotiate-nuclear-13756>; Doug Bandow, “The End of Nonproliferation,” *The National Interest*, April 1, 2011, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-end-nonproliferation-5093>.
25. See, e.g., Doug Bandow, “Leaving Korea Will Unburden U.S. Troops and Help South Korea Grow Up,” *The National Interest*, July 6, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/leaving-korea-will-unburden-us-troops-help-south-korea-grow-16866>.
26. Doug Bandow, *Tripwire: Korea and U.S. Foreign Policy in a Changed World* (Washington: Cato Institute, 1996); Ted Galen Carpenter and Doug Bandow, *The Korean Conundrum: America’s Troubled Relations with North and South Korea* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
27. “Russia Provides More than 3,000 Tons of Flour to N. Korea,” Yonhap News Agency, July 22, 2016, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/news/2016/07/22/0200000000AEN20160722009500320.html>.
28. Chen Ping, “China’s (North) Korea Policy: Misperception and Reality (An Independent Chinese Perspective on Sino-Korean Relations),” in Gilbert Rozman, ed., *China’s Foreign Policy: Who Makes It, and How Is It Made?* (Seoul: The Asan Institute for Policy Studies, 2012) p. 255.
29. Quoted in Jamil Anderlini et al., “Kerry to Call on Beijing to Rein in North Korea,” *Financial Times*, April 13–14, 2013.
30. Quoted in Joseph Bosco, “China Enables North Korean Mischief,” *Real Clear World*, January 13, 2016, [http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2016/01/13/china\\_enables\\_north\\_korean\\_mischief\\_111654.html](http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2016/01/13/china_enables_north_korean_mischief_111654.html).
31. Quoted in Kwanwoo Jun, “U.S. to Urge China to Put More Pressure on North Korea,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 2016.
32. Quoted in William Wan, “N. Korea Tests Cause Concern in China,” *Washington Post*, April 8, 2013.
33. Tim Hains, “Donald Trump on North Korea: ‘Without China They Wouldn’t Be Able to Eat,’ ‘We Have Great Power over China,’” *Real Clear Politics*, January 7, 2016, [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2016/01/07/donald\\_trump\\_on\\_north\\_korea\\_china\\_has\\_total\\_control\\_of\\_them\\_south\\_korea\\_should\\_pay\\_us.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2016/01/07/donald_trump_on_north_korea_china_has_total_control_of_them_south_korea_should_pay_us.html).
34. See, e.g., Brian Doherty, “Libertarian Gary Johnson Clarifies Foreign Policy Stances,” *Reason*, June 3, 2016, <http://reason.com/blog/2016/06/03/libertarian-gary-johnson-clarifies-forei>; Alex Pfeiffer, “Exclusive: Gary Johnson Says the Threat of Radical Islam Is ‘Overblown,’” *Daily Caller*, June 7, 2016, <http://dailycaller.com/2016/06/07/exclusive-gary-johnson-says-the-threat-of-radical-islam-is-overblown/>.
35. Bonnie S. Glaser and Brittany Billingsley, “Re-ordering Chinese Priorities on the Korean Peninsula,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 2012, p. v.
36. You Ji, “Dealing with the ‘North Korea Dilemma’: China’s Strategic Choices,” S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, RSIS Working Paper no. 229, June 21, 2011, pp. 8–11. See also “North Korean Attitudes toward China: A Historical View of Contemporary Difficulties,” North Korea International Documentation project, April 6, 2009, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/north-korean-attitudes-toward-china-historical-view-contemporary-difficulties>; Charles Kraus, “China-North Korea Dossier no. 2: ‘China’s Measure of Reserve’ toward Succession,” February 9, 2012, <http://sinonk.com/2012/02/09/china-north-korea-dossier-no-2-chinas-measure-of-reserve-toward-succession/>.
37. See, e.g., Scott Snyder, “China’s Muddled Message on North Korea,” *Forbes*, March 31, 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/scottasnyder/2016/03/31/chinas-muddled-message-on-north-korea/#397521b045f5>.

38. See, e.g., Simon Tisdall, "Wikileaks Cables Reveal China 'Ready to Abandon North Korea,'" *Guardian*, November 29, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/29/wikileaks-cables-china-reunified-korea>.
39. Nanto and Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations," p. 3. One Weibo poll found that a large majority of respondents supported U.S. military action against Pyongyang's nuclear program. Jane Perlez and Choe Sang-hun, "China Struggles for Balance in Response to North Korea's Boldness," *New York Times*, February 8, 2016, p. A4.
40. Bates Gill, "China's North Korea Policy," United States Institute of Peace Special Report no 283, July 2011, p. 3.
41. Adam Cathcart, "A Tale of Two North Koreas," *Foreign Policy*, December 30, 2011, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/12/30/a-tale-of-two-north-koreas/>.
42. See, e.g., Steven Mufson, "Online, Chinese Express Scorn for Longtime Ally," *Washington Post*, April 14, 2013, p. A15; Jane Perlez, "North Korean Leader, Young and Defiant, Strains Ties with Chinese," *New York Times*, April 14, 2013.
43. Jamil Anderlini, "North Korea Makes Public Its Paranoia over China," *Financial Times*, May 18, 2016. Indicative of the contempt in which the Kim regime apparently holds its nominal patron, defectors claim that the DPRK has been counterfeiting Chinese yuan as well as U.S. dollars. Elizabeth Shim, "North Korea Printing Massive Amounts of Fake Chinese Currency, Defectors Say," UPI, June 23, 2016, [www.upi.com](http://www.upi.com).
44. Michael D. Swaine, "China's North Korea Dilemma," *China Leadership Monitor* (Fall 2009, no. 30), Hoover Institution, p. 3.
45. Lee Jong-heon, "China's Sanctions on North Korea and Its Influence," *Vantage Point* 36, no. 5 (May 2013): 17.
46. Quoted in Malcolm Moore, "China 'Shifts Position' on North Korea," *Daily Telegraph*, April 5, 2013.
47. Quoted in Jeremy Page, "China Seeks North Korea Solution," *Wall Street Journal*, November 30, 2010.
48. See, e.g., David Ignatius, "Preparing for the Worst with North Korea," *Washington Post*, March 14, 2013, p. A21.
49. Quoted in John Irish, "China Urges U.N. Action to Make North Korea 'Pay Price,'" Reuters, February 12, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-wangyi-korea-usa-idUSKCN0VL15S>.
50. Quoted in Ben Blanchard, "China Says It's a Mistake to Put 'Blind Faith' in UN Sanctions against North Korea," *Business Insider*, March 7, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/china-says-its-a-mistake-to-put-blind-faith-in-un-sanctions-against-north-korea-2016-3>.
51. Quoted in Jane Perlez, "Chinese Banks Brace for U.S. Sanctions on North Korea," *New York Times*, June 4, 2016.
52. Quoted in Jay Solomon, "U.S. Squeezes Banks over North Korea," *Wall Street Journal*, June 2, 2016.
53. Lee Ki-Hyun, "China's Dilemma and its Policies toward North Korea in the Kim Jong-un Era—Maintaining the Status Quo while Managing a Difficult North Korea," in Bae Jung-Ho and Jae H. Ku, eds., *China's Domestic Politics and Foreign Policies and Major Countries' Strategies Toward China* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2012), p. 235.
54. Quoted in "China Weighs Up Opposing North Korea Policies," *Deutsche Welle*, March 27, 2013, <http://www.dw.com/en/china-weighs-up-opposing-north-korea-policies/a-16702386>.
55. Quoted in Jane Perlez, "North Korea Tells China of 'Permanent' Nuclear Policy," *New York Times*, June 1, 2016.

56. Quoted in Jane Perlez, "President of China Meets with N. Korean Envoy," *New York Times*, June 2, 2016.
57. Quoted in Leo Byrne, "China, North Korea Criticize New U.S. Sanctions," *NK News*, July 8, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2016/07/china-north-korea-criticize-new-u-s-sanctions/>.
58. See, e.g., Jane Perlez, "For China, a Missile Defense System in South Korea Spells a Failed Courtship," *New York Times*, July 8, 2016; Hong Soon-do, "Anti-Korea Sentiment Growing in China Due to THAAD," *Huffington Post*, July 10, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/asiatoday/anti-korea-sentiment-grow\\_b\\_10913538.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/asiatoday/anti-korea-sentiment-grow_b_10913538.html); JH Ahn, "Chinese Media Urges Economic Sanctions on THAAD Region," *NK News*, July 14, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2016/07/chinese-media-urges-economic-sanctions-on-thaad-region/>.
59. Quoted in Kathrin Hille, "China Faces Dilemma over Support for North Korea," *Financial Times*, March 11, 2013.
60. Quoted in Michael R. Gordon, "China Set to Press North Korea Further on Nuclear Aims, Kerry Says," *New York Times*, February 15, 2014.
61. Quoted in Ernesto Londono and Karen DeYoung, "Senators Urge Engaging China in N. Korea Effort," *Washington Post*, April 10, 2013.
62. See, e.g., "U.S. Urges China to Pressure North Korea," Associated Press, July 10, 2006, <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/13801936/ns/politics/t/us-urges-china-pressure-north-korea/#.V7sjIvkrIdU>. He continued to emphasize the PRC's responsibility years later. Lorraine Woellert, "China Pressure Key to Ease North Korea Tension, McCain Says," Bloomberg, April 7, 2013, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-04-07/chinese-pressure-key-to-easing-north-korea-tensions-mccain-says>.
63. Hains, "Donald Trump on North Korea."
64. Anders Corr, "Sanction China for Its Support of North Korea . . . and So Much More," *Forbes*, February 13, 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/anderscorr/2016/02/13/sanction-china-for-its-support-of-north-korea-and-so-much-more/#3772602f316a>.
65. Quoted in Cary Huang, "Why China-North Korea Relations are More Complex than Ever," *South China Morning Post*, July 11, 2013, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1279792/china-north-korea-relations-more-complex-ever>.
66. Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt, "China's North Korea Policy: Backtracking from Sunnylands?" *38 North*, July 2, 2013, <http://38north.org/2013/07/skahlbrandt070213/>.
67. Quoted in Monica Crowley, "Global Unrest a Growing Concern at Home," Fox News, December 21, 2011, <http://www.foxnews.com/transcript/2011/12/20/global-unrest-growing-concern-at-home/>.
68. Quoted in Joshua Kurlantzick, "Kimpossible," *New Republic*, December 2, 2010, <https://newrepublic.com/article/79571/kimpossible-jong-il-china-korea>.
69. Quoted in Jenna Johnson, "Donald Trump Wants China to Make North Korea's Kim Jong Un 'Disappear,'" *Washington Post*, February 10, 2016.
70. Mitchell Lerner, "Why China Is Not the Solution to the Korean Crisis," *The Diplomat*, June 3, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/06/why-china-is-not-the-solution-to-the-korean-crisis/>.
71. Interview with the author, Beijing, May 29, 2013.
72. See, e.g., Scott Snyder, *China's Rise and the Two Koreas: Politics, Economics and Security* (Boulder, CO: Rienner, 2009), p. 146; Robert E. Kelly, "The Curious Love-Hate Relationship between China and North Korea," *The National Interest*, June 23, 2016,

- china-north-korea-16470; Anderlini, "North Korea Makes Public Its Paranoia over China."
73. Quoted in Jonathan D. Pollack, "China and North Korea: The Long Goodbye?," Brookings Institution, March 28, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/03/28/china-and-north-korea-the-long-goodbye/>. A number of Americans have made similar points. See, e.g., Kurlantzick, "Kimpossible."
74. Bruce Gilley, "An Immodest Proposal," *Wall Street Journal*, January 6, 2005.
75. Quoted in Johnson.
76. Quoted in Hille.
77. Anne Applebaum, "In China, Slogans vs. Action," *Washington Post*, April 4, 2013.
78. Glaser and Billingsley, p. vi.
79. Kydd, p. 72.
80. Quoted in "China Not a 'Responsible World Power': McCain," *The Economic Times*, November 29, 2010, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-11-29/news/28397533\\_1\\_china-wu-dawei-responsible-world-power](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-11-29/news/28397533_1_china-wu-dawei-responsible-world-power).
81. Quoted in Kleine-Ahlbrandt.
82. See, e.g., Glaser and Billingsley, p. 12.
83. Lee Dong-jun, "U.S. Wants to Pass Buck over North Korea but China Ready for Deal," *Asian Review*, May 30, 2013, p. 13.
84. Drew Thompson and Natalie Matthews, "Six-Party Talks and China's Goldilocks Strategy: Getting North Korea Just Right," Korea Economic Institute, *Tomorrow's Northeast Asia: Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies* 21 (2011): 183.
85. Kydd, "Pulling the Plug," p. 64.
86. Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 181.
87. Nanto and Manyin, p. 8.
88. Nathaniel Aden, "North Korean Trade with China as Reported in Chinese Customs Statistics: 1995–2009 Energy and Minerals Trends and Implications," Nautilus Institute, Workshop Paper, June 7, 2011, p. 14.
89. See, e.g., Nanto, "Increasing Dependency," pp. 73–83.
90. "What Is the Kaesong Industrial Complex," BBC, February 10, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-22011178>; "N. Korea's Economic Reliance on China Deepens in 2015," Yonhap News Agency, June 21, 2016, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2016/06/21/040100000AEN20160621007300320.html>.
91. Gordon G. Chang, "Implications of China's Economic Penetration of North Korea," *Jamestown China Brief* 11, no. 13 (July 15, 2011), [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=38181&cHash=e51c1a4d#V7s5AfkIdU](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=38181&cHash=e51c1a4d#V7s5AfkIdU).
92. Discussing what might occur are Bruce W. Bennett, *Preparing for the Possibility of a North Korean Collapse* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 2013); and Bruce W. Bennett and Jennifer Lind, "The Collapse of North Korea: Military Missions and Requirements," *International Security* 2, no. 36 (Fall 2011): 119.
93. Quoted in Bajoria, "The China-North Korea Relationship."
94. Snyder, *China's Rise and the Two Koreas*, p. 119.
95. Thompson and Matthews, "Six-Party Talks," pp. 183–84; Sunny Lee, "Chinese Perspectives on North Korea and Korean Unification," Korea Economic Institute Academic Paper Series, January 24, 2012, p. 7.
96. See, e.g., Robert E. McCoy, "Ethnic Koreans in China not Bound to N. Korea," *NK News*,

- June 28, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2016/06/ethnic-koreans-in-china-not-bound-to-n-korea/>.
97. Gregory J. Moore, "Beijing's Problem with an Operationally Nuclear North Korea," in Gregory J. Moore, ed., *North Korean Nuclear Operationality: Regional Security and Nonproliferation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 96.
98. Lee Ki-Hyun, p. 219.
99. Quoted in Yu Ziaodong, "Friends Like These," *NewsChina*, May 2013, p. 54.
100. Lee Ki-Hyun, p. 238.
101. Interview in Beijing, May 29, 2013.
102. Quoted in Javier C. Hernandez, "China, in Rebuke, Suggests U.S. Worsened Ties with North Korea," *New York Times*, January 8, 2006.
103. Quoted in "China Media: North Korea Sanctions," BBC, March 8, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-21710919>.
104. Quoted in "China Urges United States, North Korea to Hold Direct Talks," Reuters, February 15, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-satellite-china-idUSKCN0VO0TR>.
105. Hui Zhang, "China's North Korea Dilemma," *Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 2013.
106. Glaser and Billingsley, "Reordering Chinese Priorities," p. v.
107. Gideon Rachman, "Prepare for Endgame in North Korea," *Financial Times*, March 11, 2003.
108. You Ji, p. 17.
109. See, e.g., Mark Landler and Martin Fackler, "An American Warning to China Causes a Ripple Effect on the Korean Peninsula," *New York Times*, January 21, 2011.
110. Quoted in Anne Gearan, "Kerry: China to 'Bear Down' on Pyongyang," *Washington Post*, April 14, 2013.
111. Thomas J. Christensen, "The Advantages of an Assertive China," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (March/April 2011): 54–67.
112. Doug Bandow, "The Case for 'Friendly' Proliferation," *Foreign Affairs Online*, July 26, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/japan/2016-07-26/let-them-make-nukes>; Doug Bandow, "America's Brain Dead Policy toward the Korean Peninsula: Time for South Korea—and Japan—to Develop Nuclear Weapons?" *Forbes*, August 11, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/dougbandow/2014/08/11/americas-brain-dead-policy-toward-the-korean-peninsula-time-for-south-korea-and-japan-to-develop-nuclear-weapons/#34abec648916>.
113. Sue Mi Terry, "A Korea Whole and Free: Why Unifying the Peninsula Won't Be So Bad after All," *Foreign Affairs*, June 18, 2014, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2014-05-29/korea-whole-and-free>.
114. Quoted in Blanchard, "China Says It's a Mistake."
115. You Ji, "Dealing with the 'North Korea Dilemma,'" pp. 13–14, 18; Snyder, *China's Rise and the Two Koreas*, p. 156.
116. For instance, the RAND Corporation's Bruce W. Bennett suggested creating lines of separation in case the United States, ROK, and China all moved into a failed North Korea. Bennett, pp. 273–75.
117. Quoted in Ha-young Choi, "China Will Uphold Its Interests with North Korea: Glaser," *NK News*, May 4, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2016/05/china-will-uphold-its-interests-with-north-korea-glaser/>.
118. Victor Cha, "China's Newest Province?" *New York Times*, December 20, 2011.



119. Kydd, p. 67.
120. The possibilities are considered in Andrei Lankov, "Post-Coup North Korea: A China-Controlled Future Puppet State?" *NK News*, July 12, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2016/07/post-coup-north-korea-a-china-controlled-future-puppet-state/>.
121. Quoted in Gearan, "Kerry: China to 'Bear Down.'"
122. Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, p. 201.
123. Bandow, *Tripwire*; Carpenter and Bandow, *Conundrum*.
124. Park Chang Kwoun, "The Deepening Rivalry between the United States and China and Its Influence on the Regional Order and National Security of the ROK," Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, *Korea Journal for Defense Analysis*, Issue 13, December 21, 2015, p. 7.
125. Park Jong-chul et al., "Easing International Concerns over a Unified Korea and Regional Benefits of Korean Unification," Korea Institute for National Unification Study Series 13-03, July 2013, p. 37.
126. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
127. Quoted in Ping, pp. 269–70.
128. JH Ahn, "North Korea Sold Fishing Rights to China for \$30 Million, Lawmaker Claims," *NK News*, July 1, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2016/07/north-korea-sold-fishing-rights-to-china-for-30-million-lawmaker-claims/>.
129. Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, "Economic Relations Between China and North Korea: Evidence from a Firm-Level Survey," Appendix B, in Glaser and Billingsley, "Reordering Chinese Priorities," p. 54.
130. See, e.g., Terry.
131. Applebaum.
132. Glaser and Billingsley, p. 24.
133. *Ibid.*
134. Hao Yufan, "China's Korea Policy in the Making," in Rozman, *China's Foreign Policy*, p. 278.
135. David Ignatius, "A U.S.-China Test," *Washington Post*, June 2, 2013.
136. Quoted in Peter Alford, "S Korea Demands US Nuclear Shield," *Australian*, October 6, 2006, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/printpage/0,5942,20572345,00.html>.
137. Richard Weitz, "Global Insights: South Korea Does Not Need Nuclear Weapons," *World Politics Review*, February 26, 2013, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/12743/global-insights-south-korea-does-not-need-nuclear-weapons>.
138. "Nuclear Neighbors for North Korea?" Room for Debate, *New York Times*, March 11, 2013, [www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/03/11/](http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/03/11/).
139. "Saenuri Calls for Nuclear Capability to Deter the North," *Korea Joongang Daily*, February 19, 2013, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2967341>; Weitz, "Global Insights"; Samuel Songhoon Lee, "Hawks Urge South Korea's Nuclear Armament," *Korea Herald*, February 15, 2013; Martin Fackler and Choe Sang-hun, "As North Korea Blusters, South Flirts with Talk of Nuclear Arms," *New York Times*, March 11, 2013.
140. M.J. Chung, "Thinking the Unthinkable on the Korean Peninsula," Keynote delivered at the 2013 Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference, Washington, D.C., April 9, 2013, p. 6.
141. "Saenuri Calls for Nuclear Capability to Deter the North"; Samuel Songhoon Lee, "Hawks Urge South Korea's Nuclear Armament."
142. See, e.g., Weitz, "Global Insights"; "South Korea's Nuclear Future," *World Politics Review*, June 21, 2011, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com>.

- com/articles/9220/global-insights-south-koreas-nuclear-future. 2006 <http://www.economist.com/node/8341099>.
143. Howard W. French, "Taboo against Nuclear Arms Is Being Challenged in Japan," *New York Times*, June 9, 2002.
144. "Japan's New Leader," *Economist*, November 27, 2006.
145. See, e.g., Elaine Lies, "Japan PM Scrambles to Contain Nuke Remark Fallout," Reuters, June 3, 2002.
146. Moore, "Beijing's Problem with an Operationally Nuclear North Korea." p. 77.

## **RELATED PUBLICATIONS FROM THE CATO INSTITUTE**

**A Costly Commitment: Options for the Future of the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Relationship** by Eric Gomez, Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 800 (September 28, 2016)

**Japan's Security Evolution** by Jennifer Lind, Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 788 (February 25, 2016)

**Technologies Converge and Power Diffuses: The Evolution of Small, Smart, and Cheap Weapons** by T. X. Hammes, Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 786 (January 27, 2016)

**Friends Like These: Why Petrostates Make Bad Allies** by Emma Ashford, Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 770 (March 31, 2015)

**The Illusion of Chaos: Why Ungoverned Spaces Aren't Ungoverned, and Why That Matters** by Jennifer Keister, Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 766 (December 9, 2014)

**Responsible Counterterrorism Policy** by John Mueller and Mark G. Stewart, Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 755 (September 10, 2014)

**Arms and Influence in Syria: The Pitfalls of Greater U.S. Involvement** by Erica D. Borghard, Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 734 (August 7, 2013)

**The Korean Conundrum: America's Troubled Relations with North and South Korea** by Ted Galen Carpenter and Doug Bandow (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)

## **RECENT STUDIES IN THE CATO INSTITUTE POLICY ANALYSIS SERIES**

- 805. **Apprenticeships: Useful Alternative, Tough to Implement** by Gail Heriot (November 17, 2016)
- 804. **The Repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act: Myth and Reality** by Oonagh McDonald (November 16, 2016)
- 803. **Twenty-Five Years of Indian Economic Reform** by Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar (October 26, 2016)
- 802. **The New Feudalism: Why States Must Repeal Growth-Management Laws** by Randal O'Toole (October 18, 2016)
- 801. **The Case Against a U.S. Carbon Tax** by Robert P. Murphy, Patrick J. Michaels, and Paul C. Knappenberger (October 17, 2016)
- 800. **A Costly Commitment: Options for the Future of the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Relationship** by Eric Gomez (September 28, 2016)

799. **Dose of Reality: The Effect of State Marijuana Legalizations** by Angela Dills, Sietse Goffard, and Jeffrey Miron (September 16, 2016)
798. **Terrorism and Immigration: A Risk Analysis** by Alex Nowrasteh (September 13, 2016)
797. **Five Myths about Economic Inequality in America** by Michael Tanner (September 7, 2016)
796. **Freedom of Speech under Assault on Campus** by Daniel Jacobson (August 30, 2016)
795. **25 Years of Reforms in Ex-Communist Countries Fast and Extensive Reforms Led to Higher Growth and More Political Freedom** by Oleh Havrylysyn, Xiaofan Meng, and Marian L. Tupy (July 12, 2016)
794. **Options for Federal Privatization and Reform Lessons from Abroad** by Chris Edwards (June 28, 2016)
793. **New York's Bank: The National Monetary Commission and the Founding of the Fed** by George Selgin (June 21, 2016)
792. **The Problem with the Light Footprint: Shifting Tactics in Lieu of Strategy** by Brad Stapleton (June 7, 2016)
791. **Hate Speech Laws: Ratifying the Assassin's Veto** by Robert Corn-Revere (May 24, 2016)
790. **A Walk Through the JOBS Act of 2012: Deregulation in the Wake of Financial Crisis** by Thaya Brook Knight (May 3, 2016)
789. **Menu Mandates and Obesity: A Futile Effort** by Aaron Yelowitz (April 13, 2016)
788. **Japan's Security Evolution** by Jennifer Lind (February 25, 2016)
787. **Reign of *Terroir*: How to Resist Europe's Efforts to Control Common Food Names as Geographical Indications** by K. William Watson (February 16, 2016)
786. **Technologies Converge and Power Diffuses: The Evolution of Small, Smart, and Cheap Weapons** by T. X. Hammes (January 27, 2016)
785. **Taking Credit for Education: How to Fund Education Savings Accounts through Tax Credits** by Jason Bedrick, Jonathan Butcher, and Clint Bolick (January 20, 2016)



Published by the Cato Institute, Policy Analysis is a regular series evaluating government policies and offering proposals for reform. Nothing in Policy Analysis should be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of the Cato Institute or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress. Contact the Cato Institute for reprint permission. All policy studies can be viewed online at [www.cato.org](http://www.cato.org). Additional printed copies of Cato Institute Policy Analysis are \$6.00 each (\$3.00 each for five or more). To order, please email [catostore@cato.org](mailto:catostore@cato.org).