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NORTH KOREA'S PERENNIAL DIET OF CARROTS AND STICKS

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“Recognizing that improving ties is a natural goal in relations among states and that better relations would benefit both nations in the 21st century while helping ensure peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and in the Asia-Pacific region, the U.S. and D.P.R.K. sides stated that they are prepared to undertake a new direction in their relations. As a crucial first step, the two sides stated that neither government would have hostile intent toward the other and confirmed the commitment of both governments to make every effort in the future to build a new relationship free from past enmity.”

U.S.-D.P.R.K. Joint Communiqué of October 12, 2000¹

The “new direction” promised at the end of the Clinton Administration never came.

During the first high-level contact between the Bush Administration and the isolated North Korean government in early October 2002, the DPRK acknowledged it had clandestinely developed facilities to enrich uranium, saying it was no longer bound by the terms of a 1994 accord that froze its old plutonium-based program.² In one bold stroke, North Korea’s reclusive leader, Kim Jong Il, had given the United States an opportunity to isolate the DPRK from its traditional allies, China and Russia. The Bush Administration could now give North Korea a clear choice: dismantle all of its nuclear facilities in return for continued engagement or face a series of escalating economic and military sanctions.

For this all-too-familiar carrot and stick strategy to work, however, China and Russia must be convinced to threaten to cut off critical fuel exports to North Korea, something they have been unwilling to do in the past. The risk is that China, Russia or both could overtly or covertly undermine any sanctions regime, forcing the United States to pursue unilateral military options that might split the U.S.-Japan-ROK alliance or spiral into a devastating war.

The “wild card” is the current Iraq crisis. If the United States succeeds in toppling the Iraqi regime and if North Korea does not develop a significant nuclear deterrent in the interim, the U.S. negotiating position with its allies and adversaries could be strengthened. Regime change in North Korea might then become an explicit goal of U.S. policy. In any event, a preemptive

military strike on North Korean facilities would effectively entail a strategy aimed at toppling the Kim Jong Il regime. It should be recommended only as a last resort and only if it is certain that China and Russia will sit on the sidelines.

U.S. Interests and Objectives

As elsewhere, U.S. interests on the Korean Peninsula compete and conflict with each other. On the one hand, the global war on terrorism requires steps to prevent nuclear, biological and chemical weapons from falling into the hands of “rogue states” and hostile terrorist groups. On the other hand, aggressive U.S. moves to prevent nuclear proliferation on the Korean Peninsula could threaten the peace and prosperity of our major East Asian allies, Japan and South Korea, and a deepening economic relationship with China that supports an international economic order fundamental to U.S. economic prosperity.

North Korea has been labeled a “rogue state” and, as President Bush’s National Security Strategy states, “We must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends.”³ Yet, the DPRK has done little to undermine the success of the United States or its allies, South Korea and Japan during the 50-year standoff since the signing of the Korean War armistice. Apart from the indirect effects of exporting ballistic missile technology to states that may assist terrorist groups, North Korea has not directly threatened to use nuclear weapons in an offensive strike. Similarly, the DPRK insists that its forward-located, conventional artillery is a deterrent to ROK and U.S. plans to undermine its regime. And while North Korea is developing long-range missile capabilities that could threaten Japan and the United States, the DPRK’s stated intentions are defensive.

The United States enjoys a strong and growing economic relationship with all the economies of Northeast Asia. South Korea is our seventh largest trading partner, and although it ranks only 27th on the list of top locations for U.S. investment – just below China – U.S. direct investment in the ROK has reached nearly \$10 billion on a historical-cost basis. Income on that investment exceeds \$1 billion per year.⁴ The ROK economy is closely integrated with the economies of Japan and, increasingly, China: total trade between the three exceeded \$200 billion in 2001.⁵

The U.S.-ROK political relationship has been strong since the Korean War. South Korea is a success story of American diplomacy, a role model for how to make the transition from a developing country with an authoritarian dictatorship to an advanced economy with a pluralistic political system not too different from our own. Even if the memory of direct U.S. conflict with North Korea is fading, the stationing of 30,000-plus U.S. troops in South Korea is a persistent reminder and a “trip wire” to ensure U.S. involvement in any conflict on the peninsula.

The U.S. troop presence is also a first line of defense against China, which some view as a rival to American influence. If the Japanese public wearies of the American presence on Okinawa, for example, U.S. basing rights in Korea could become more and more important. A confrontation on the Korean Peninsula could jeopardize the continued presence of these troops.

North Korean Perspectives

Kim Jong Il’s regime seeks to survive in a world that has been fundamentally altered by the collapse of communism. Unlike other remaining totalitarian states, the DPRK faces an imminent threat from an ethnic and cultural twin whose population is twice its size and whose economy is at least 27 times larger.⁶ The DPRK’s southern rival is supported by the world’s only remaining superpower, the United States, while its traditional allies, China and Russia, are becoming

noncommunist, market-oriented societies. Despite its self-reliant ideology, the DPRK regime is heavily dependent on its allies for critical supplies of fuel. North Korea's adversaries, South Korea, Japan and the United States, supply it with about one half of a structural food deficit of 1.3 million metric tons per year.

While struggling to maintain legitimacy by using brutal totalitarian methods, Kim Jong Il has also made tentative steps toward economic reform. Most recently he has sharply devalued the currency, eliminated rationing, and raised wages many fold.⁷ More important, Kim Jong Il has reached out to the world, establishing diplomatic relations with nearly all of the EU states, hosting the first-ever inter-Korean summit in June 2000, and attempting to build on the 1994 Agreed Framework.

The Agreed Framework, however, has been a mixed blessing. North Korea agreed to "freeze" and eventually dismantle its 250-megawatt graphite reactor program in exchange for the provision of two 1,000-megawatt light water reactors and 500,000 metric tons of heating oil a year until the first reactor became operational, and both reactors were expected to be operational by 2003. At the current pace, however, the first reactor would be operational only in 2008. The deal also committed the United States to ease economic sanctions and establish diplomatic relations, as progress warranted. The easing of sanctions has resulted in almost no economic gain to the DPRK, primarily because North Korea does not benefit from the low, "most-favored nation" tariffs provided by the United States to South Korea and other members of the World Trade Organization and because Washington has blocked DPRK access to international finance institutions. Neither side has moved toward establishing diplomatic relations.

After the initial project delays, the DPRK's failed satellite launch (or missile test) over Japanese territorial waters made it impossible to secure sufficient funding from Japan for the

Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), which builds the light-water reactors and provides the heating oil on behalf of the four Executive Board members – the United States, ROK, Japan and the EU. At the same time, a leak to the U.S. press suggesting that an underground facility at Kumchang-ni was nuclear-related led to tense negotiations with the United States and two verification trips in 1999 and 2000 that predictably (because the DPRK allowed the access) uncovered no such program.⁸ Obtaining funds from Congress to cover the cost of the oil deliveries has been difficult, adding to DPRK complaints about the energy it says it would have developed if the freeze had not been implemented.

The 1998 missile launch/test, DPRK intransigence in negotiations with KEDO, and continued carping about U.S. failures to implement the Agreed Framework was probably an attempt to bring the United States back to the table to negotiate further economic concessions in return for curbing missile exports and/or indigenous development. (The DPRK announced in June 1998 it would end missile sales if it were compensated for the lost income, which it said two years later was worth \$1 billion per year.) The flurry of activity that took place after South Korean President Kim Dae Jung's historic visit to Pyongyang in June 2000 – the October visit to Washington of DPRK High-Level Envoy Cho Myong Rok, during which the United States and DPRK issued the communiqué cited at the head of this paper; Secretary of State Albright's subsequent visit to Pyongyang to probe a bizarre DPRK proposal to halt its missile program in return for U.S.-sponsored launches of North Korean satellites (passed through Russian President Putin); and discussion of a visit by President Clinton – pointed to the possibility of rapid rapprochement and further tangible economic benefits for the DPRK.⁹

Clinton's decision not to travel to North Korea and the advent of the new Bush Administration's "policy review," however, alerted the DPRK that Washington might not

continue its engagement policy. Particularly unnerving to the DPRK was the terse conclusion of that review, in a June 6, 2001 statement from President Bush: “I have directed my national security team to undertake serious discussions with North Korea on a broad agenda to include: improved implementation of the Agreed Framework relating to North Korea’s nuclear activities; verifiable constraints on North Korea’s missile programs and a ban on its missile exports; and a less threatening conventional military posture.”¹⁰ Adding conventional forces to the equation was a major departure and, from the DPRK perspective, extremely provocative.

After the September 11 terrorist attacks and President Bush’s reference to North Korea as part of an “axis of evil” in his 2002 State of the Union Address, the U.S. message seemed to harden. As if to underscore the changed atmosphere, on April 1, 2002 President Bush decided not to “certify” to Congress that North Korea was adhering to all the provisions of the Agreed Framework – the first time any U.S. administration had done so. Although a Presidential “waiver” allowed funds to be disbursed to KEDO to continue heating oil shipments, Congress clearly received the message that Administration support for the Agreed Framework was wavering. Without a “smoking gun,” however, any move by the United States to abrogate the Agreed Framework would undermine U.S. credibility and give the DPRK a public diplomacy bonanza. (Because the Agreed Framework is a political commitment, not a treaty or contract, “abrogation” is technically a misnomer.)

Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly provided the “smoking gun” during his meetings of October 3-5, 2002 in Pyongyang – the first since the inauguration of President Bush. After denying the existence of a clandestine enriched uranium program during the first day of talks, the North Koreans astonished the U.S. side the next day by acknowledging that they indeed had such a program – and more. The DPRK side blamed the Bush Administration and said it considered

the Agreed Framework “nullified.” Kelly countered that North Korea obviously had embarked upon this alternative program several years before President Bush took office.¹¹ The uncharacteristic decision by Pyongyang to cede the “moral high ground” to the U.S. side (for Kim Jong Il cannot credibly argue he did not lie to Clinton as well) gives the United States new leverage to pry China and Russia away from Pyongyang.

Toward A New Engagement Strategy

The first step toward a new engagement strategy is, ironically, for the United States to consult with its allies and with China and Russia in an effort to cut off some but not all of the benefits the DPRK enjoys under the existing arrangements. The goal is to compel the DPRK to maintain the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) freeze on its plutonium facilities and to commit to dismantle its new uranium enrichment program, in return for continued and then enhanced economic assistance. The rationale for keeping some of the benefits flowing is to induce the DPRK to abandon its traditional tit-for-tat response to sanctions.

Slowdown in KEDO Operations: Domestic political pressure will require that the United States cease cooperation with the DPRK under the Agreed Framework – at least temporarily – cutting deliveries of heavy fuel oil, which make up perhaps 11 percent of North Korea’s critical fuel imports.¹² (The precise percentage is unknown since China does not make public all of its assistance, particularly fuel for the North Korean military.) Congress would probably require the cutoff as part of the funding authorization for KEDO, so the Administration should probably grab the bull by the horns and stop the shipments anyway. KEDO could continue most of its work at the replacement reactor site (the excuse could be to avoid project “escalation costs”) while seeking to draw North Korea back into a cooperative arrangement.

Reduced Economic Assistance: The planned inter-ministerial talks with South Korea should go forward, if Pyongyang does not cut them off, and the talks should focus on the nuclear issue. The ROK position should be that no economic assistance – beyond humanitarian relief – would be forthcoming until the DPRK agrees to dismantle its enrichment program under some sort of verification regime. The ROK should probe whether the inspection provisions of the moribund 1992 Joint Declaration on the De-nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula (“Joint Declaration”) could form the basis for such verification. Japan should take the same tack in its normalization meetings with Pyongyang: no resolution of the normalization issue, including sizeable development assistance loans as reparations for World War II, until Pyongyang relents. U.S. allies having diplomatic representation in Pyongyang (or through their embassies in Beijing) should deliver the same message.

Threatened UN Sanctions Down the Road: China and Russia must also agree to eventual support for UN Security Council sanctions to compel the DPRK to give up its enrichment program, an element that was missing during the negotiation of 1994 Agreed Framework.¹³ To prevent the DPRK from withdrawing altogether from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (as it attempted in 1994) the United States should probe whether China and Russia would support regional action in lieu of or in support of typical IAEA activities. For example, “experts” from Russia, China and other key IAEA member states could help verify any DPRK pledge to either dismantle its uranium fuel cycle or to redirect it to peaceful, civilian purposes. The costs of providing inspection and other services related to dismantling the facilities could be deducted from debts owed by either party to South Korea or debts owed by North Korea to them.

The Sanctions Trigger: The critical diplomatic issue will be enlisting Chinese and Russian support for immediate economic sanctions if the DPRK decides to unfreeze its old plutonium

processing facilities. China and Russia will have to find a diplomatic way to raise the possibility of supporting UN sanctions and credibly declare that they will totally cut off the DPRK from fuel for its military if it unfreezes its old program. Should China and Russia balk at bearing such a message, the United States must make clear that Washington will have no choice but to reinsert tactical nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula if North Korea does accept the principle of maintaining the IAEA freeze. We should remind Moscow and Beijing that the mere of existence of nuclear weapons and a missile development program in North Korea would compel Japan to consider its own nuclear options. The United States could provide additional economic or political incentives for Chinese and Russian cooperation, but this could face stiff resistance in Congress.

Keeping the Door Open to Bilateral Dialogue

To show that Washington is keeping open its lines of communication with Pyongyang and seeking a peaceful resolution, the State Department should use the so-called New York Channel (meetings at the North Korean UN mission in New York) to “pre-cook” a series of statements and actions that would be unveiled at meetings held elsewhere.

No Hostile Intent: The U.S. would offer to reaffirm the language on “no hostile intent” contained in the October 2000 Joint Communiqué if the DPRK declared it would maintain the IAEA freeze on its plutonium facilities and agree, in principle, to dismantle its uranium-based fuel cycle or re-direct it to peaceful purposes. The U.S. representatives would also explain the domestic political requirement to hold back some of the benefits of the original Agreed Framework.

Humanitarian Relief: Also through the New York Channel, the Administration should indicate its willingness to continue to provide humanitarian relief in response to appeals from the World Food Program, a move that is in line with longstanding U.S. humanitarian interests.

Regional Conference: The most important question to explore is whether Pyongyang is in favor of “regionalizing” aspects of its conflict with the United States. U.S. negotiators should probe whether the DPRK would support a conference on North Korea’s nuclear activities that included representatives from the ROK, Japan, China, and Russia, as well as the United States. Although the Clinton Administration rejected such a proposal from Russia during the previous nuclear crisis, growing trust between Washington and Moscow suggests that this time Russian intervention could be a positive inducement. Such a conference would be predicated on DPRK assurances that it would give up its uranium enrichment program under a verification regime, as well as Russian and Chinese assurances that they would ultimately support UN sanctions if the conference failed.

Conventional Confidence Building Measures: The United States should indicate that sincere DPRK steps to reduce the threatening posture of its conventional military forces would be read as a positive signal. It should note that it would be prepared to join a bilateral North-South effort to defuse the current crisis.

Bolder Incentives

In its discussions in New York, the United States should indicate that it is prepared to make even bolder moves if the DPRK indicates a willingness to move forward in a comprehensive way to address U.S. issues of concern. (According to press reports, Assistant Secretary Kelly’s initial purpose in traveling to Pyongyang was to present such a “bold approach,” but the evidence that

the DPRK was cheating on its nonproliferation commitments made it impossible to present any such ideas.)

Economic Development Fund: Washington should suggest the establishment of a Korean Peninsula Economic Development Fund to underwrite cooperative North-South projects, including the trans-Siberian rail and oil pipeline links already mooted in Seoul and Moscow. If Pyongyang were serious about carrying out meaningful economic reforms, the United States would then be willing to support DPRK membership in international financial institutions, such as the Asian Development Bank and World Bank, which could take over or contribute to the projects developed under the fund. The fund would act as a sort of halfway house between isolation from international lending institutions and full participation in the IMF-World Bank system. The United States should also explain that it would be willing to grant “most favored nation” tariff rates to imports from joint North-South cooperative ventures.

Peace Negotiations: Both bilaterally and through its allies and China, the United States should indicate to Pyongyang that it is willing to move to serious negotiations over a final Korean War peace accord, either through the stalled Four-Party Talks or bilaterally. The United States should affirm that it is willing to establish full diplomatic relations with the DPRK as soon as arrangements can be made to finance the establishment of diplomatic missions and secure diplomatic pouch facilities – on the condition that the DPRK completely abandons its nuclear ambitions under a rigorous verification regime.

A Complementary Military Strategy

A number of military measures short of a direct attack on North Korean military installations should be used to complement our diplomatic strategy: interdiction, the enhancement of South Korean defenses, launching aggressive propaganda and intelligence

campaigns, and finally, the re-introduction of tactical nuclear weapons. The timing of each action would depend on the sensitivity of the intelligence sources and methods involved and how the DPRK, China and Russia respond to our coercive diplomacy.

Interdiction: In the post-September 11 era, the export of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons and related technologies to states that sponsor terrorism clearly threatens vital American interests. The United States should make unambiguously clear that it would tolerate no efforts by Pyongyang to peddle these materials outside of the Korean Peninsula. We should inform the DPRK, China, Russia, Pakistan, and our South Korean and Japanese allies that we plan to interdict such shipments if we have credible intelligence that they are taking place. If such shipments take place on neutral vessels or vessels carrying a Chinese or Russian flag, U.S. action would have to be somewhat restrained. Likewise, we would rely initially on our allies in cases involving their vessels.

Enhanced ROK Defenses: If the DPRK does not respond to our diplomatic initiatives and moves closer to deploying nuclear weapons, the United States should provide Seoul with sharply increased counter-artillery and anti-chemical warfare defenses for Seoul and the coastline. U.S. troops should be gradually but conspicuously reinforced.

Propaganda: The United States and ROK should unleash a coordinated propaganda campaign using covert and overt assets on the Korean Peninsula and overseas to show that U.S. objectives are limited and do not target the regime or its people. Leaflets and radios dropped from balloons or other unmanned aircraft flying over North Korea should broadcast the limited nature of U.S. and ROK aims and the quality of life in store for North Korea if it gives up its nuclear facilities.

Intelligence Gathering: The United States should visibly ramp up its military intelligence capabilities on the peninsula, including the aggressive use of unmanned aircraft.

Re-nuclearization: Finally, the United States should threaten and then reintroduce tactical nuclear weapons onto the Korean Peninsula. Although the DPRK did not give the U.S. any rhetorical credit for withdrawing the weapons during the last crisis, the rollback would send a clear signal. The goal would be to deter the DPRK from chemical, biological or nuclear attacks against South Korea or Japan and to set the stage – at least in theory – for possible attacks on underground North Korean facilities.

Planning For the Worst Case

The fundamental dilemma of using military force to eliminate North Korea's nuclear weapons program is that even a limited air strike of its nuclear, biological or chemical arsenals – assuming we know where they are – risks a general war. Thus, to prepare for limited war is to prepare for total war. To make that calculation all the more risky, the DPRK has positioned some 60 divisions and brigades of its million-man armed forces south of a line connecting Pyongyang, the DPRK capital, and Wonson, on the east coast. About 500 artillery tubes are within range of Seoul, where 40 percent of the South Korean population and the leadership reside. It is assumed that North Korea has stockpiled sufficient nerve agents to make a devastating wave of artillery attacks on Seoul.¹⁴

A second problem will be convincing Russia and China to stand aside in the face of U.S. military action above the demilitarized zone. Both countries have bilateral security arrangements with Pyongyang, although the Russians have reworked theirs so that it is clear they will respond

only if an aggressor attempts to invade North Korea.¹⁵ At the early stages of any potential conflict, the United States and ROK would have to make crystal clear to Beijing and Moscow that their objective is purely to eliminate North Korea's nuclear threat and establish a lasting peace on the peninsula. We should also assure them that U.S. forces will move north of the demilitarized zone only as a last resort and will return south as soon as practicable. To the extent possible, the two allies should enlist Russian and Chinese aid in preparing for North Korean refugees or troops that might flee in the event of a military contingency.

Assuming the whereabouts of North Korea's facilities are known, U.S. air forces would use stealthy, precision-guided missiles and/or bunker-busting bombs to attack the DPRK's plutonium, uranium, biological or chemical weapons sites and related facilities. Since there is little doubt that North Korea – even without assurances of support from China and Russia – would strike back with its artillery, U.S. air forces would simultaneously target the long-range artillery aimed at Seoul, much of which would survive, along with some nuclear, biological, and chemical capability located at the rear. Beijing and Moscow would be immediately notified of the limits and purposes of U.S. action.

If the DPRK regime does not fracture into internecine, warring groups, the North Korean response would almost certainly be to follow its doctrine and launch a do-or-die offensive aimed at Seoul. The new U.S. political and military objective would be to replace the regime with a junta favorably disposed to some sort of condominium with South Korea. Such an attack would try the patience of China and Russia who we hope would remain neutral or play a supporting role restoring civil order in the North Korean border areas. South Korean troops would provide the backbone for an

immediate counter-offensive and would work alongside U.S. Special Operations Forces infiltrated in the early phases.

The North Korean attack would focus on Seoul, South Korea's center of gravity. At the same time, North Korea would probably launch a smaller invasion along the less-fortified, rugged East Coast, and would send thousands of special operations forces deep behind the lines to attack ports, airfields, and other lines of communications and to disrupt U.S. attempts to reinforce ROK troops. The U.S.-ROK counteroffensive would target Pyongyang, including command and control facilities and government sites, such as the palace where Kim Jong Il's revered father, Kim Il Sung, is permanently enshrined. The objective would be to break the will of the North Korean military and prompt the establishment of a junta that would sue for peace.

If the U.S.-ROK alliance keeps the initiative under this scenario and defends its airfields from North Korean commandos, the alliance will enjoy immediate air and sea superiority in the theater. The major allied operational constraint will be moving sufficient troops and logistical elements from Japan and the U.S. mainland to support South Korea's out-manned forces, which will number only 600,000 personnel initially. Because of its larger population, however, South Korea's reserve strength is about equal to that of North Korea and the effects of prolonged years of low rations will eventually take its toll on the North Korean troops. (The corollary is that U.S. logistical support will be proportionally more expensive on a per capita basis than North Korea's.) Although there will be mass confusion in Seoul in the event of a chemical artillery shell bombardment, South Korean forces will probably hold the city

and – as in the Korean War – ROK resolve will stiffen. Again, assuming U.S. military action has concluded in Iraq, the United States should have sufficient capability to reinforce South Korean troops quickly and begin a decisive counteroffensive.

If the North Korean command and control structure, much of which is underground, survives U.S. bombing and special forces operations, the allies may mount an amphibious operation. Since plans for such an amphibious landing at Wonsan – on the east coast – were “leaked” to the Korean press in 1998, a strike at Nampo or a direct thrust up the west coast may actually have more of an element of surprise. The goal would be to cut the peninsula in half at its narrow point thrusting westward across the mountains toward the capital city. A landing at Nampo/Pyongyang would have the best chance of decapitating the regime. The decision would be made by the battlefield commander depending on the results of the battle in Seoul.

Additional Constraints

Korean Americans are not as active as other immigrant communities in lobbying Congress, but the history of our bilateral relationship with South Korea, the presence of U.S. troops acting as a sort of tripwire in the event of a confrontation with North Korea, and the importance of maintaining economic sources of supply in Asia force us to become involved in any crisis. Congressional and public support for using military means to achieve our ends would be low, however, even in the face of North Korean brinkmanship. Funding is a key constraint. For example, Congress has only grudgingly funded the heavy fuel oil program under the Agreed Framework, citing the inadequacies of the arrangement and the need for more support from other

countries. The White House will have to perform some “heavy lifting” to provide the economic assistance outlined as part of the coercive “carrot and stick” strategy outlined above.

China and Russia will counsel patience in dealing with North Korea’s nuclear program, and Japan and South Korea can be expected to resist military brinkmanship. Even though elections in South Korea may bring in a more conservative government at the end of 2002 and polls show the ROK public believes President Kim Dae Jung’s “Sunshine Policy” toward North Korea is too one-sided and generous, a conservative president will be under pressure to avoid a devastating conflict with North Korea at almost any cost. Fundamentally, South Koreans are not as concerned as Americans about North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons because they do not believe the DPRK would use them unless attacked. Only strong leadership from the White House – and generous offers of long-term U.S. financial assistance – can be expected to overcome ROK resistance to aggressive U.S brinkmanship.

Japan’s interests are perhaps closer to our own, with an emphasis on preventing the development of the DPRK’s short- and medium-range missile capability. Like South Koreans, however, the Japanese probably believe it unlikely that North Korea would use such weapons as part of an offensive strategy. Prime Minister Koizumi’s unexpected trip to Pyongyang in September 2002 to break the deadlock over Japanese citizens abducted by North Korean agents years ago suggests that Tokyo may be uncharacteristically trying to take the lead in engaging the DPRK. If the normalization talks go well, the opportunity presents itself to add Japanese war reparations to the basket of economic incentives.

With the exception of France, all of the members of the European Union have rushed to set up diplomatic relations with North Korea recently, led by the United Kingdom. Although skeptical of the DPRK’s nuclear intentions and generally willing to let the United States take the

lead, they tend to favor engagement and discussion over sanctions. EU funding for DPRK initiatives will be small, but the United States could probably count on the UK to sever diplomatic relations with Pyongyang if not join the U.S.-ROK alliance in a direct military action against the DPRK.

Conclusion

Although the United States could use air power to destroy much of North Korea's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, without credible advance intelligence that the North Korean military command structure would collapse before Seoul suffered a devastating artillery attack, American economic and political interests would suffer enormous (but not irreparable) harm. But U.S. brinkmanship, the only politically feasible alternative, risks a general war that could bring the United States into direct confrontation with China, with uncertain consequences for the future positioning of U.S. forces in Asia. It is also unclear what concessions the Chinese and Russians might extract in return for their cooperation in the event of a U.S. attack.

If China and Russia agree to deny North Korea access to critical supplies of fuel, U.S. brinkmanship stands a good chance of compelling the DPRK to negotiate some sort of "improved" Agreed Framework. China, Russia, and our allies would be more likely to support such a strategy if the U.S. clearly left the door open for dialogue and offered to regionalize aspects of the problem and to increase the short-term economic incentives. The "wild card" is Iraq. A successful ouster of Saddam Hussein would make it easier for the United States to convince the DPRK that it must give up its nuclear weapons or face a similar fate. It would also put our allies on notice that U.S. resolve is strong.

End Notes

¹ U.S. Department of State, “U.S.-D.P.R.K. Joint Communiqué of October 12, 2000,” On Arms Control Association Web Site. <www.armscontrol.org/Events/communique.asp>

² Sigal, Leon, Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 124.

² Details of North Korea’s acknowledgment of its uranium enrichment program have not been made public. General accounts can be found in U.S. Department of State, “North Korean Nuclear Program: Statement by Richard Boucher, Spokesman,” October 12, 2002; Slevin, Peter and Karen DeYoung, “N. Korea Admits Having Secret Nuclear Arms,” The Washington Post, October 17, 2002, pp. A1 and A17; and Struck, Doug and Glenn Kessler, “Hints on N. Korea Surfaced in 2000,” The Washington Post, October 19, 2002, p. A19.

³ The White House, “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” September 2002, p. 14.

⁴ U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Survey of Current Business, September 2002, p. 68. <www.bea.doc.gov/bea/pub/0902/contxls.htm>

⁵ Tables are available at <www.OECD.org>

⁶ Bank of Korea, “Gross Domestic Product of North Korea in 2001,” (Seoul: May 15, 2002.) <www.bok.or.kor>

⁷ Shirk, Susan. “A New North Korea?” The Washington Post, October 22, 2002. A27.

⁸ Arms Control Association, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy,” <www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron.asp>

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Statement by the President.” June 6, 2001.

¹¹ U.S. Department of State, “North Korean Nuclear Program: Statement by Richard Boucher, Spokesman,” October 12, 2002.

¹² U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration, “North Korea.” October 21, 2002. <www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/nkorea.html> According to the DOE, North Korea consumes about 80,000 barrels of oil per day, while its imports from KEDO amount to about 3.3 million barrels, or 9,000 barrels per day.

¹³ Sigal, Leon, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

¹⁴ Jane's, "Armed Forces, Korea, North," and Jane's, "Armed Forces, Korea, South," <www.janes.com>, and Pike, John, "OPLAN 5027 Major Theater War – West," <www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oplan-5027.htm>.

¹⁵ Kunadze, Georgy, "Russia's Hands Tied Over N. Korea," Special to The Daily Yomiuri. December 2, 1999, <www.2.gol.com/users/coynerhm/russias_hands_tied_over_n_korea.htm>; Shin, Paul, "North Korea, Russia Pledge to Renew Strategic Ties," Associated Press, August 5, 2001, <www.nctimes.net/news/2001/20010805/61940.html>; and "Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance Between the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," (extracted from Peking Review, Vol. 4, No. 28, p.5.) in Database of Postwar Japanese Politics and Diplomacy, Basic Documents of Postwar International Politics. <www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/docs/19610711.TIE.html>

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