

US Foreign Policy toward North Korea

A Way Ahead

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SINCE 2001, the Bush administration has been following an ineffective foreign policy toward North Korea that has failed to meet the security interests of the United States. Contrary to the national security interests delineated in the *2006 National Security Strategy (NSS) of the United States of America*, North Korea has developed and tested a nuclear weapon, continues to demonstrate the propensity to proliferate high-lethality weapons, and threatens regional stability with these weapons and its aggressive military posture.

Recently, in what can be seen as an acknowledgement of the failure of the policy of the past six years, the United States has reversed its policy toward North Korea in Six-Party Talks (i.e., United States, China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, and North Korea) aimed at resolving the nuclear issue. Shifting from a policy of isolation and suffocation to force the regime into submission, the United States has turned to a policy of appeasement, offering concessions reminiscent of the 1994 Agreed Framework that halted the North's plutonium program.¹

Equally noteworthy has been the speed at which recent negotiations have progressed, with North Korea once again shutting down its Pyongyang plutonium production facilities, allowing the return of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors, and agreeing to disable

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the plutonium reactor and account for all nuclear materials. This rapid progress has absorbed politicians and pundits alike with great, even almost unguarded, optimism—so much so, that it appears many have ignored or forgotten the regime's past behavior. Indeed, North Korea has already achieved its goal of nuclear weaponization with potentially dozens of nuclear weapons in its arsenal—a feat it has accomplished over not just a few uncomfortable and arguably instigative years as an “axis of evil” but through decades of persistent development.

Yet, US problems with North Korea extend well beyond the nuclear issue. As delineated in the 2006 *NSS*, North Korea presents numerous other security challenges to the United States. Besides its propensity to proliferate weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the threat to regional stability with these weapons, and its aggressive military posturing, North Korea consistently violates the human rights and dignity of its own population. The possession of nuclear weapons itself undermines US efforts to prevent the spread of WMDs and places the technology in the hands of an unpredictable adversary, while continued military tension on both sides of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) increases the chances of miscalculations that can result in a regional conflict. Meanwhile, the ongoing economic instability in North Korea poses a potential humanitarian and economic crisis to the region and encourages such illicit activities as narcotics trafficking and US currency counterfeiting, which undermine general US national security interests.

A History of Policy Failure

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and concerns over suspected North Korean nuclear aspirations in the early 1990s, the focus of US policy toward North Korea shifted from a Cold War containment policy to nuclear nonproliferation. Though this new era brought dialogue between the North and the United States, little attention was given to addressing broader US interests outside of nonproliferation. Soon, revelations of North Korea's plutonium extraction program led to a flurry of intense diplomatic activity, culminating in the 1994 Agreed Framework, mentioned above, that provided for improved diplomatic relations and economic ties along with energy assistance to the North in exchange for shutting down plutonium production facilities. Despite guarantees from the United States, little more than the promise of oil deliveries was fulfilled. Instead, with

North Korea's nuclear facilities shut down, US obligations of developing diplomatic and economic relations succumbed to political pressures in Washington, DC, as politicians followed a "wait and see" policy, believing that North Korea would soon either follow the path of post-Soviet era Eastern Europe or, at any rate, not survive the power transition from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il.

Contrastingly, but with even greater detrimental effects, the Bush administration shifted policy by closing the diplomatic door and halting fuel oil shipments to North Korea over a suspected uranium enrichment program. The Bush policy established five objectives toward North Korea: terminate the 1994 Agreed Framework, suspend diplomatic engagement until North Korea unilaterally halts its nuclear program, apply economic pressure through an international cooperation, plan for "future economic sanctions and military interdiction against North Korea," and draw red-lines to discourage North Korea from processing plutonium.² Once again, nonproliferation took precedence over other interests.³ The response was predictable. In 2003, North Korea declared the 1994 agreement dead and restarted its plutonium-producing reactors. In October 2006, the policy failures were unmistakable: North Korea conducted its first nuclear test.

Two common denominators that contributed to the failures in the policies of both the US Clinton and Bush administrations were a narrow focus on the nuclear issue and a tendency to either ignore or otherwise not meet North Korean interests. While the distastefulness of dealing with a repressive regime may have contributed to the poor policy decisions, North Korea has not made determining its interests easy, either. On the contrary, North Korea has been all too eager to sign agreements seemingly contrary to its own interests, making it easy for policy makers to overlook the North's real interests. Over the last two decades, North Korea has repeatedly signed declarations and agreements with several countries, committing itself in practice to a nuclear-free peninsula, only to ignore its obligations under the agreements. Among these agreements have been the 1992 Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the 2005 Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks, Beijing.⁴

A third, less obvious, common denominator exists. Under both administrations, the United States has not effectively coordinated its policy with other regional players. Under the Clinton administration, talks began at a bilateral level, excluding North Korea's closest neighbors—South Korea,

China, Russia, and Japan—ultimately leaving the United States to negotiate support for its Agreed Framework *ex post facto*. Fortunately for the Clinton administration, South Korean president Kim Dae Jung was leading a “sunshine policy” very amenable to the administration’s agreement. While cooperation gradually gained momentum, disagreements over financing provisions of the Agreed Framework ensued, creating delays in delivery of energy development concessions that may have added to skepticism by North Korea of US commitment.

Cooperation with regional players gradually developed throughout the Clinton administration and into the Bush administration until negotiations evolved into Six-Party Talks that included North Korea’s aforementioned neighbors. However, an unwelcomed shift in US policy from one of rapprochement to a more hostile position hampered further progress on the nuclear issue. Furthermore, the Six-Party forum has hindered progress on other issues by continuing to focus mainly on the nuclear nonproliferation in lieu of a more comprehensive solution to issues surrounding North Korea.

The glaringly obvious effect of the failure to leverage partners has been under the Bush administration. Put off by the administration’s intransigence on North Korean policy—and eager to see progress on the peninsula—regional players have engaged North Korea bilaterally in both military talks and economic trade. Most notably, South Korea has encouraged joint business ventures in Kaesong and has opened a tourist destination in Kumgang. China and Russia have similarly worked to establish joint ventures in North Korea, though with lesser degrees of success. On one hand, these actions have made small but significant steps in drawing North Korea out. On the other hand, it has created a dichotomy of policies that North Korea has been able to exploit, thus undermining US attempts to isolate the regime.

It is clear that while both the Clinton and Bush administrations have taken different approaches, in both cases US policy has focused on the nuclear issue, tended to ignore the interests of North Korea, and ineffectively leveraged our partners. Not surprisingly, the results have been the same. North Korea remains an adversarial country with nuclear ambitions, and comprehensive US interests have not been met. The solution to the problem is not to drum up old policies but to develop a new policy⁵—a way ahead that addresses the shortcomings of past policies.⁶ More precisely, substantial and enduring results can only be realized when the

United States develops a policy based on a comprehensive analysis of its own national security strategy and other supporting policy documents, as well as those of the “Group of Four” (four key regional players—Japan, China, South Korea, and Russia) and North Korea. This analysis must include identifying and acknowledging the legitimate interests of North Korea, comparing them to US security interests, and defining the challenges and incorporating opportunities the United States has in working with regional parties in addressing US interests.

National Security Interests of the United States

In the world today, the fundamental character of regimes matters as much as the distribution of power among them.

—2006 US National Security Strategy

The *NSS* defines the “worldwide interests, goals, and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security.”⁷ Under law, it also delineates foreign policy and the uses of elements of diplomatic, information, military, and economic (DIME) power necessary to achieve these goals and objectives. Such information yields the ends (goals and objectives), ways (foreign policy), and means (elements of the DIME) toward our national security strategy.

The ends in the *NSS* are succinctly stated in the president’s foreword message in the document: “to protect the security of the American people.”⁸ The security interests of the United States are those objectives that collectively contribute to this “end.” The objectives relevant to North Korea are extracted by studying the essential tasks laid out in the *NSS*. They are halting terrorism, preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons, promoting regional stability, encouraging economic development, and promoting human dignity.

“America is at war.” So starts the president’s forward to the *NSS*, referring to the global war on terrorism. The *NSS* describes the “grave challenge” of terrorism as a battle between both the terrorists and their ideology.⁹ This ongoing war and the threat of terrorism have shaped the US security posture since 2001 and places defeating *terrorism* as a national security interest.

The United States has committed itself to a four-pronged approach as the way to accomplishing this interest: “preventing attacks . . . before they occur,” denying “WMD to rogue states and to terrorist allies,” denying terrorists sanctuary in rogue states, and denying terrorists control of nations for basing operations.¹⁰ The means include taking the fight to the

enemy by the use of “military force and other instruments of national power” in a lead effort with partner nations.¹¹

Though North Korea is not mentioned as a terrorism concern in the *NSS*, it remains on the State Department list of state sponsors of terrorism. This dubious distinction is the result of past involvement in terrorist activities and harboring terrorists. Despite inactivity from terrorist activities since 1987, North Korea remains on the list. Concern over WMDs that can be sold to terrorists or other state sponsors of terrorism may contribute to the North’s continued presence on the list,¹² though the Bush administration has indicated a recent willingness to remove North Korea’s status as a state sponsor of terrorism as a concession at Six-Party Talks.¹³

The *NSS* places the proliferation of nuclear weapons as “the greatest threat to our national security” and specifically labels North Korea as a “serious nuclear proliferation challenge.” Furthermore, the *NSS* acknowledges the pursuit of WMDs by terrorists “in order to inflict even more catastrophic attacks on us.”¹⁴ With the North’s development of nuclear weapons, it is yet unclear whether it will attempt to sell that technology or weapons in exchange for much-needed cash or other resources. However, North Korea is known to have sold sophisticated military hardware in the past to rogue states that have supported terrorists, such as Syria and Iran, portending the possible future disposition of its nuclear weapons.¹⁵

North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons makes it a national security interest to prevent the *proliferation of nuclear weapons*. The *NSS* states that the way to prevent proliferation is to deny rogue states or terrorists the legitimate ability to produce fissile material and to prevent states with this capability from transferring fissile material to these actors (ways).¹⁶ Accomplishment is through closing loopholes in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); international diplomacy; improving “security at vulnerable nuclear sites worldwide and bolster[ing] the ability of states to detect, disrupt, and respond to terrorist activity involving WMD [means]”; and use of force.¹⁷ These means will likely require the assistance of the IAEA to secure nuclear sites and support of allied nations to block or interdict WMD shipments.

The *NSS* states that the “survival of liberty at home increasingly depends on the success of liberty abroad” while recognizing that the greatest challenges to liberty worldwide are from those countries that tyrannically rule over their subjects through brutality and suppression. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea) is explicitly listed in the *NSS* as one of these tyrannies. Hence, it is a national security

interest of the United States to stop *human rights* abuses in the DPRK. To meet this interest, the *NSS* establishes a goal of ending tyranny and promoting democracy (ways) through a “full array of political, economic, diplomatic, and other tools” (means).¹⁸ Some of the tools mentioned include sanctions, support of reformers, and partnering with other democratic nations to bring pressure to bear.

The *NSS* states that “if left unaddressed, [regional conflicts can lead to] failed states, humanitarian disasters, and . . . safe havens for terrorists.”¹⁹ Inexplicably, despite the United States military’s nearly 60-year presence on the peninsula to maintain peace and stability, the Korean peninsula is not among the numerous countries specifically mentioned in this section of the *NSS*. Nevertheless, conditions on the peninsula meet the criteria of the *NSS* for potential future regional conflict, including poor governance and competing claims (such as waters in the Yellow Sea). Therefore, it is a security interest of the United States to promote *regional stability*.

To stabilize the region, the United States has established conflict prevention and resolution as a key element (way). The *NSS* identifies the promotion of democracy as the “most effective long-term measure.” However, in the short term, using “free nations” of good rapport in order to assist with short-term resolutions with a preference toward regional players and addressing the problems in a “wider regional context” are the preferred methods (means).²⁰

The *NSS* defines economic freedom as a “moral imperative.” The United States views countries lacking economic freedom as inclined to violate intellectual property rights, suffer from poverty, encourage black markets, and involve themselves in other illicit activities, including money counterfeiting and narcotics trafficking. Illicit trade, in turn, “undermines effective governance; facilitates the illicit transfer of WMD and advanced conventional weapons technology; and compromises traditional security and law enforcement,” which “if left unaddressed can threaten national security.” Furthermore, the *NSS* recognizes impoverished states as “not only a threat to their people and a burden on regional economies, but are also susceptible to exploitation by terrorists, tyrants, and international criminals.” These matters make North Korea’s *economic development* a national security interest of the United States. Again, the *NSS* does not name North Korea directly, but the concerns expressed in the *NSS* for developing countries, such as corruption, poverty, and illicit trade, are applicable to North Korea. In meeting the ways and means, the *NSS* states that the United

States will assist the world's poor to enter the global economy (ways) through various programs, including providing foreign assistance through existing regional and international organizations and initiatives, "creating external incentives for governments to reform themselves," and promoting regional initiatives to disrupt illicit activities (means).²¹

National Security Interests of China

Countries should resolve their disputes and conflicts peacefully through consultations and not resort to the use or threat of force. Nor should they interfere in others' internal affairs under any pretext. China never imposes its social system and ideology on others.

—"China's Independent Foreign Policy of Peace," 2003

China's national security interests are derived from the defense white paper *China's National Defense in 2006*, foreign policy papers, and other selected policy white papers.²² The State Council Information Office published the most recent defense white paper in December 2006. Foreign policy papers, consisting of six short papers addressing specific policy issues, were published in 2003 by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In addition to the above-mentioned documents, *China's Peaceful Development Road* (previously *China's Peaceful Rise*) and *China's Endeavors for Arms Control, Disarmament, and Non-Proliferation* round out pertinent policy papers. These papers are influenced by China's "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence." Originally introduced in the 1950s, these principles have been reaffirmed throughout the years, including in the most recent defense white paper. The five principles are mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, noninterference in other nations' internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.²³ Combined, these numerous documents provide the basis for China's national security strategy and from which interests with the United States may be compared.

China's defense white paper states that "the threat of terrorism remains serious,"²⁴ while a diplomatic policy paper adds that "China is firmly opposed to all forms of terrorism."²⁵ "China's Peaceful Development Road" identifies the need for cooperation between countries to defeat terrorism in order to "stamp out both the symptoms and root causes."²⁶ China's defense white paper provides several examples in which the country has

involved itself in confronting terrorism, including the Regional Antiterrorism Structure (RATS), an antiterrorism body set up between China and several Central Asian countries along China's northwest border that has participated in information sharing as well as military and civilian exercises.²⁷ China has also addressed terrorism in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum.

As an ally of North Korea, further supported by information contained in China's various strategy and policy documents, China does not perceive North Korea as a terrorist nation. Based on the United States' own ambiguous stance regarding North Korea's connection with terrorism as indicated by the willingness to remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, it is highly unlikely that the United States would be able to gain Chinese support for antiterrorism actions against the North.

China regards the problem of nuclear weapons proliferation as "grave and complex"²⁸ and officially holds that it is "firmly opposed to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery."²⁹ This stance extends to the Korean Peninsula, where China shares the common goal of a nuclear-free peninsula with the United States.³⁰

In consonance with its five principles, China contends that "the issue of nonproliferation should be dealt with by political and diplomatic means within the framework of international law [which] should be maintained, further strengthened, and improved."³¹ Supporting this position, China has routinely rejected other means, including the US-backed Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI).³²

Current policy notwithstanding, China has a strong incentive as an aspiring regional leader to bring pressure to bear on North Korea. First, the nuclear test has reopened discussions in Japan over its own moratorium on nuclear weapons.³³ Despite the current Japanese administration's strong commitment to its own ban on nuclear weapons, the debate demonstrates the corrosive effect a nuclear North Korea has on the liberal will of a nation. Furthermore, the race for nuclear weapons in any of China's more Western-minded democratic neighbors has a direct bearing on China's own security interests.

Second, the development of nuclear weapons in the North strengthens the pro-West, conservative position in South Korea. Conservatives in South Korea have long contended that the liberal engagement policies enacted by Kim Dae Jung and carried on by his successor, No Moo-Hyun, have only aided in supporting the North's military and its nuclear program

by allowing funds to be diverted from economic to military projects.³⁴ Such actions could tip the scales under the newly elected South Korean president in favor of the staunchly pro-West conservatives and set back years of progress China has made in gaining political favor in the South, contrary to China's regional political interests.

China states that the "government has attached importance to human rights"³⁵ in its foreign affairs, adding that "[China] should actively promote and guarantee human rights to ensure that everyone enjoys equal opportunities and right to pursue overall development."³⁶ China's growing awareness towards human rights is reflected in a provision added to its constitution in 2003 that says "the state respects and safeguards human rights."³⁷

Based on China's preference for international diplomacy and its involvement in numerous human rights conventions, China can be expected to use these tools for pushing its interests.³⁸ However, there are two significant challenges in aligning China's human rights interests with those of the United States: China's definition of human rights and policy of noninterference.

Probably the greatest challenge to aligning China's support for human rights with US interests is how each defines human rights. The US view of human rights focuses on individual liberties and political expression, while China's human rights are centered on collective rights and maintaining the social structure. In other words, China pursues those human rights that favor social harmony over political discord, measuring success in terms of social and economic well-being, health care, and basic subsistence.³⁹ On the other hand, individual freedoms such as freedom of speech, freedom of press, and freedom of religion are often curbed since a strong civil society challenges the state control.⁴⁰

The second challenge posed is China's policy of noninterference. China's foreign policy paper states that China will "never impose [its] social system and ideology on others."⁴¹ This policy of noninterference is reflected in numerous other official Chinese government documents as well and has been a cornerstone of national policy since the 1950s.

China has little self-interest in North Korea's human rights. Unlike South Korea and Japan, which both have unresolved human rights claims against North Korea such as abductees and POW cases, China has neither. Furthermore, since both countries are run under communist ideology with an unstated premise of maintaining social harmony for the benefit of the state, China's human rights views align closer to North Korea's than to the American position. Success in addressing human rights may best be approached by con-

vincing China that helping to resolve outstanding issues will enhance its position as a power broker and valuable partner to Japan and South Korea.

China acknowledges the growing interdependence of nations by economic globalization and the need for cooperation in an international security environment. In addition, the defense white paper recognizes the 2006 nuclear test and missile launches as factors that have made the situation in Northeast Asia “more complex and challenging.”⁴²

In resolving the issue of regional stability, China looks to “establish fraternal relations with surrounding regions and promote cooperation in maintaining regional security.”⁴³ To this end, China has actively participated in regional-level organizations, including ASEAN+3 (the “+3” includes Japan, China, and South Korea).⁴⁴

China’s concern for regional stability in regards to North Korea can mostly be addressed in resolving the nuclear row. Beyond that, China’s greatest concerns for regional stability focus on the Taiwan-US relationship and the evolving and outward-looking role of Japan’s Self Defense Force⁴⁵ and the missile defense cooperation between Japan and the United States that they argue will “bring new unstable factors to international and regional peace and security.”⁴⁶

China recognizes that “some countries face growing internal problems caused by social and economic transition”⁴⁷ and suggests that, “address[ing] development and security issues through coordination, cooperation, and multi-lateral mechanism is the preferred approach of the international community.”⁴⁸ In line with South Korea’s stance on economic development, China holds that “developed countries should shoulder the responsibility to . . . increase development aid [and] help relevant countries shake off the troubling financial crisis and enhance cooperation with developing countries.”⁴⁹

National Security Interests of Japan

Japan will continue to ensure deterrence against any movement that might destabilize the Asia-Pacific region by maintaining the Japan-US Security Arrangements.

—*Diplomatic Bluebook 2006*

Japan’s national security interests are drawn from three documents: the defense white paper *Defense of Japan 2006*, the foreign policy document *Diplomatic Bluebook 2006*, and the policy paper *National Defense Program Guidelines*. These three documents form the nexus of Japan’s security interests.

Also worthy of mention is *The Council on Security and Defense Capabilities Report*, an official government assessment providing recommendations for Japan's national security strategy. Many of the recommendations were incorporated into the most recent *National Defense Program Guidelines*. However, a formal national security strategy is not yet published.

As a longtime US ally whose democratic institutions, capitalist market system, and national defense have been significantly influenced and shaped by direct US involvement, Japan shares many common security interests with the United States. Yet, Japan's options of addressing these interests are considerably hampered by its own constitutional limits and an imperial past that has produced lingering suspicion by surrounding nations of any Japanese lead role in the region. Hence, Japan's ways and means require a carefully considered balance of diplomatic and economic instruments of power and a healthy reliance on a continuing and active US role to provide the necessary pressure to address common international and regional security issues. This approach is evident in the Japanese national strategy documents. The defense white paper states that "in order to meet its security objectives, Japan will support UN security initiatives, strengthen ties with the United States under the Japan-US Security Arrangements, develop 'cooperative relations' with other countries through diplomacy, develop the military, and ensure political stability at home."⁵⁰

For Japan, "activities of international terrorist organizations . . . pose a serious threat" to the economic welfare and safety of all Japanese citizens.⁵¹ Hence, "Japan regards counter-terrorism as its own security issue."⁵² In addressing terrorism, Japan intends to "strengthen vigorously counter-terrorism measures in cooperation with the international community in a wide range of areas including the provision of assistance to other countries and reinforcement of the international legal framework."⁵³ Past means have included logistical support of military operations in the war on terror, inclusion in international, regional, and bilateral agreements aimed at disrupting terrorist networks, and technical and financial assistance to poor countries to assist in counterterrorism capacity building.⁵⁴

Japan acknowledges that North Korea has not been linked to terrorism in the past two decades. However, Japan's National Police Agency labels North Korea as a terrorism concern,⁵⁵ and the government continues to encourage the United States maintain North Korea's status as a state sponsor of terrorism.

Japan's defense white paper ranks alongside terrorism the proliferation of nuclear weapons and "ballistic missiles that serve as a means of delivery for

these weapons,”⁵⁶ adding that “halting WMD proliferation has become an urgent issue.”⁵⁷ This statement draws in line Japan’s national security interest of stopping nuclear and missile proliferation with the US interest.

Japan has remained active in supporting international efforts to block nuclear weapons proliferation through a mechanism Japan terms as “dialogue and pressure.” (Dialogue includes multilateral talks and governmental consultations. Pressure has been with soft power, ranging from decrees by the UN to general awareness of Japan’s allies.)⁵⁸ In addition, Japan “considers that the maintenance and strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime as one of its major foreign policy objectives.”⁵⁹ In halting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, Japan intends to use diplomatic efforts to actively encourage nations to support and strengthen existing regimes while physically involving itself in the enforcement of those regimes through cooperative efforts such as the Proliferation Security Initiative.

Japan has addressed the threat of missiles issue by teaming with the United States to build a ballistic missile defense system. Furthermore, Japan considers international cooperation in numerous nonproliferation regimes (including the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, the Proliferation Security Initiative, and the Missile Technology Control Regime) as essential.

Japan shares many of the same values concerning human rights as does the United States. However, concerning North Korea, Japan’s interest is predominantly focused around Japanese abductees, which Japan considers a “very grave problem” to the safety and security of Japanese citizens⁶⁰ and “of the highest priority” of numerous issues it seeks to resolve in its bilateral Comprehensive Talks.⁶¹ Japan’s actions to resolve this issue include Japan-North Korea bilateral talks, support for international efforts to increase awareness such as the 2006 UN resolution titled “Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” and appointment of an ambassador for human rights to address this and other human rights issues.⁶² These efforts form Japan’s “dialogue and pressure” to human rights.⁶³

In the Six-Party Agreement reached in February 2007, Japan stated that it would not assist in providing energy aid to North Korea until the North made progress in resolving the issue of abductees.⁶⁴ North Korea, for its part, considers the case resolved with the repatriation of five Japanese citizens in 2002, claiming that the remaining eight in question are now deceased.⁶⁵

Referring to the North-South military standoff, Japan's defense white paper states, "Maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula is vital for the peace and stability of the entire East Asia,"⁶⁶ while noting, "a more stable international security environment has become a common interest of all states."⁶⁷ In maintaining stability, Japan expresses its ways and means straightforwardly: "Japan regards the improvement and strengthening of multilayer frameworks for bilateral and multilateral dialogue while securing the presence and engagement of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region to be a realistic and appropriate way to develop a stable security environment surrounding Japan and to ensure peace and stability in the region."⁶⁸ These ways and means reflect the limits Japan faces in achieving its own interests independently as a result of sensitive relations with neighbors due to its wartime past.

Japan is a major Official Development Assistance (ODA) contributor to Asian nations, contributing over 2.5 billion dollars in aid in 2004.⁶⁹ Japan's contributions reflect awareness that "Asia . . . has a major influence on Japan's security and prosperity."⁷⁰ Despite this fact, North Korea is not a beneficiary of Japan's ODA contributions. Instead, most economic assistance from Japan to North Korea has come through economic aid packages directly from Japan or indirectly through the World Food Bank. In addition, remittances from Koreans living in Japan have provided significant cash to the North. However, with the current row over abductees, the July 2006 missile launch, and the October 2006 nuclear test, Japan has restricted food and energy aid and cash remittances to the North.⁷¹

National Security Interests of South Korea

South Korea is "pursuing the realization of a comprehensive security [that includes] not only military issues but also non-military issues pertinent to politics, economy, society, environment and so on."

—2004 Defense White Paper

The South Korean national security interests, ways, and means are described in the country's 2004 national security strategy titled *Peace, Prosperity, and National Security*; the defense white paper titled *2004 Defense White Paper*; and the Korean government policy papers, the president's "Top 12 Policy Goals" and "Key Diplomatic Tasks."

The national security strategy reveals several principles that guide South Korea's ways and means:

1. Opposition to any war and support for peaceful conflict resolution.
2. Mutual recognition, mutual trust, and reciprocity.
3. International resolution of issues of the Korean Peninsula with recognition that North and South Korea are the central parties.
4. Public approval of government initiatives.⁷²

These principles show that South Korea's "realization of a comprehensive security" will come through a soft approach in contrast to US policies. It should also be noted that these principles tend to align the South's ways and means more closely with China than with the United States.

The defense white paper states that "unpredictable threats of terrorism posed by non-state rogue organizations or forces have been recognized as an important aspect of national security," requiring international cooperation and information sharing.⁷³ Though little else is provided regarding the ways and means for addressing terrorism, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade identified in a speech the containment and eventual eradication of terrorism as the ultimate goal.⁷⁴ South Korea has been an active partner in both Afghanistan and Iraq in maintaining peace and reconstruction.⁷⁵

For South Korea, the North Korean nuclear impasse "has emerged as the paramount threat to national security."⁷⁶ South Korea sees the resolution of the nuclear issue as a diplomatic challenge that needs to be addressed through a combination of Six-Party Talks⁷⁷ and inter-Korean dialogue that offers "significant assistance" to North Korea for abandoning its program.⁷⁸

South Korea has pursued a policy of positive engagement with North Korea since 1998, favoring soft diplomacy and economic assistance to foster positive behavior. This policy, referred to as the "sunshine policy," was instituted by Kim Dae Jung in 1998 and lives on in the current administration under the banner "policy of peace and prosperity." The sunshine policy shunned coercive diplomacy in favor of "cooperative engagement," even in the face of adversity.⁷⁹ This path has run counter to US attempts to pressure North Korea into abandoning its nuclear program and has been criticized by conservatives as indirectly propping up the regime and allowing the North to continue its nuclear weapons program.⁸⁰ However, proponents of the sunshine policy argue that the United States' antagonistic policies increase military tensions across the DMZ and increase the probability of

suffocation and subsequent collapse of the North Korean regime, which would be exorbitantly costly to the South.⁸¹

In regards to missiles, South Korea's defense white paper states that "along with nuclear and biochemical weapons, the proliferation of missiles or the delivery means of those weapons has emerged as a fresh threat posing a stumbling block to international and regional stability."⁸² The Republic of Korea (ROK) has worked in the past to coordinate diplomatic efforts with the United States and other countries to resolve outstanding missile issues, indicating that such an approach is likely to continue.⁸³ However, more active participation, such as in the PSI, has been avoided to prevent confrontations with the North.

South Korea establishes the "promotion of liberal democracy and human rights" as one of the national security interests.⁸⁴ For South Korea, the main human rights issues of concern include abductees and unrepatriated POWs.⁸⁵ South Korea has sought inter-Korean dialogue to resolve these human rights issues.⁸⁶ More broadly, South Korea commits itself to actively supporting international efforts to advance human rights.⁸⁷

The South Korean government has come under criticism on several occasions by human rights organizations and its own population for ignoring human rights issues in favor of improving relations with the North.⁸⁸ However, South Korea continues to delicately approach the issue for fear of derailing current progress on other issues.

South Korea "has placed the establishment of a peace regime on the Korean peninsula as a top policy task."⁸⁹ It has also taken significant steps in cooperation with North Korea to maintain stability in the region, including establishing a system to prevent at-sea confrontations and seeking participation in "various cooperative security programs."⁹⁰ Additionally, South Korea seeks to "win support of the international community for its Policy for Peace and Prosperity" while working to improve inter-Korean cooperation and "increase international assistance" for ongoing North Korean reforms.⁹¹ For South Korea, the North-South issues (excluding the nuclear and missile issues) are first and foremost a matter that must be resolved by the two sides.⁹²

South Korea identifies the "common prosperity of South and North Korea and Northeast Asia" as an objective to meet South Korea's national security interests.⁹³ In engaging the North in economic development, South Korea has stated that it will develop projects "that will mutually benefit South and North Korea."⁹⁴ To this end, South Korea has made notable attempts to move the North along in economic development,

including development of the Kaeseong Industrial Complex and the Mount Kumgang tourist destination, as well as direct financial assistance.⁹⁵

National Security Interests of Russia

Attempts to ignore Russia's interests when solving major issues of international relations, including conflict situations, are capable of undermining international security, stability, and the positive changes achieved in international relations.

—2000 Russian *National Security Concept*

Russia's national security interests are described in three documents: the *National Security Concept (NSC)*, which "outlines a systematic approach to providing security for the individual, society and state against possible internal or external threats";⁹⁶ the *Russian Federation Military Doctrine*, a defense white paper that "identifies the key political, strategic and economic factors essential to ensuring Russia's military security";⁹⁷ and the *Foreign Policy Concept (FPC) of the Russian Federation*, which "provides for a systematic approach to the content and direction of Russian foreign policy."⁹⁸ These documents collectively provide a basis from which Russian interests can be compared to US interests.

Russia's national security interests are significantly shaped by three factors: social and economic problems associated with the transition to a free-market economy, the diminishing role and influence of Russia in the international community, and transnational crime and terrorism inside and along its borders in former Russian states. These factors have fundamentally narrowed the national interests to a regional focus. Nonetheless, Russia still shares some critical interests with the United States concerning North Korea, including the proliferation of WMDs.

The *NSC* states, "Terrorism represents a serious threat to the national security of the Russian Federation."⁹⁹ Russia identifies the development of international cooperation to fight terrorism as one of its policy goals. Specifically, Russia suggests international agreements and "collaboration with foreign states and their law-enforcement and special agencies, and also with international organizations tasked with fighting terrorism" to counter terrorism.¹⁰⁰

The *NSC* lists the proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles as one of the "fundamental threats in the international sphere"¹⁰¹ and specifically

commits the country to an “unswerving course toward strengthening the regime of nonproliferation of mass destruction weapons and their delivery vehicles”¹⁰² as a principal task. To confront this challenge and strengthen the regime, the *FPC* states that Russia will work “jointly with other states in averting the proliferation of nuclear weapons . . . and means of their delivery.”¹⁰³

Russia does not address the problem of human rights in North Korea. However, more broadly, the *NSC* defines two general goals: “to seek respect for human rights and freedoms the world over on the basis of respecting the norms of international law”¹⁰⁴ and “to expand participation in international conventions and agreements in the human rights area.”¹⁰⁵

Regarding Asia, the *FPC* states that “the greatest concern is the situation in the Korean Peninsula.”¹⁰⁶ Despite this clear indication of the importance of the Korean Peninsula to regional stability, the issues of the peninsula are not further addressed. For dealing with regional stability, the *FPC* states that “the emphasis will be on the invigoration of Russia’s participation in the main integration structures of the Asia-Pacific Region—the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum [and] the regional forum on security of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).”¹⁰⁷

The *NSC* states, “It is an important priority of state policy to ensure national interests and uphold the country’s economic interests.”¹⁰⁸ To accomplish the economic interests, Russia seeks “to expand markets for Russian products.”¹⁰⁹ The *FPC* adds, “Russia must be prepared to utilize all its available economic levers and resources for upholding its national interests.”¹¹⁰ While Russia’s strategy documents do not directly address North Korea in its economic strategy, the shared border with Russia and possible railway access to South Korea make North Korean economic well-being an important aspect for Russian national and economic security.

National Security Interests of the DPRK

The main tasks of the Government of the Republic are to achieve the total socialism in North Korea and get the peaceful unification with South Korea rejecting the external forces.

—DPRK Government Home Page

Walter Mondale once said, “Anyone who calls themselves [*sic*] an expert on North Korea is a liar or a fool.”¹¹¹ This statement underlines the challenges faced by policy makers in developing effective foreign policies that deal with

the duplicitous behavior of North Korea. Unfortunately, US policy makers have struggled to define clearly just what North Korea's interests are.

Mondale's words notwithstanding, determining North Korea's national security interests are an essential task in developing a meaningful foreign policy. In doing so, it is not merely enough to consider the expressed interests of North Korea as an accurate measure of its true interests. Consider that North Korea has freely entered into past agreements that are clearly contrary to its national interests. What seems irrational is actually quite rational, according to George Kennan. Kennan, the scholar-diplomat known best for his 1954 *Foreign Affairs* article, described similar Soviet conduct, explaining the communist mind-set that leads to this contradictory behavior: committing to agreements without the intent to abide by them is considered acceptable since it is viewed as "a tactical maneuver permissible in dealing with the enemy (who is without honor)."¹¹² For North Korea, a win-lose scenario exists through which the good faith commitments of other nations can be garnered while the tightly controlled North secretly continues its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Therefore, the decision to enter into "binding" agreements should not be taken as an indication of North Korean national interest.

Clearly, agreements alone are a poor indicator of North Korea's national interests. Where then, do we turn to find the North's true interests? History and ideology combined with the interests expressed in past agreements all help to remove the cloud from a consistent pattern of deception and bad faith dealings and shed light on the true national security interests. With these tools, we find that North Korea's security interests are regime survival (protecting the regime from external forces), security of the state (protecting the political ideology of the state against internal forces), and reunification.

Keeping Kennan's thoughts in mind and recognizing North Korea to be a socialist country of similar ilk to the former Soviet Union with its own peculiarities introduced by Kim Il Sung, it is clear that analysis of North Korea's national security interests would be incomplete without a solid understanding of the ideology which leads the country. To establish this baseline knowledge, various ideological works by Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il must be taken into account. Armed with a reasonable understanding of the ideology, interests expressed in negotiated agreements, open source information, and a historical perspective of the peninsula, information can be collected and analyzed to determine the security interests. Due

caution was taken when gathering information from the state-controlled Korea Central News Agency (KCNA) to ensure that propaganda was supported by actions or interests expressed in negotiations. Some of the resources used to determine North Korean interest are the Open Source Center (opensource.gov); the DPRK official news agency (KCNA); the DPRK official Web site; Kim Jong Il's works "10-Point Programme of the Great Unity of the Whole Nation for the Reunification of the Country," *Let Us Advance under the Banner of Marxism-Leninism and the Juche Idea*, "Giving Priority to the Ideological Work is Essential for Accomplishing Socialism," and "On Preserving the Juche Character and National Character of the Revolution and Construction"; and declarations and agreements (1992 Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, 1993 DPRK-US Joint Statement, 1994 Agreed Framework, 2000 South-North Joint Declaration, 2001 DPRK-Russia Moscow Declaration, 2002 Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, 2005 Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks, Beijing, and 2007 Denuclearization Action Plan).

As may be recalled from the *NSS*, America's end is "to protect the security of the people." One may analogously conclude that the ends of any communist state would be "to protect the security of the State." However, for North Korea, such an application would be an oversimplification, as the challenges facing North Korea are unique, even for a communist regime. First and foremost, perceived external threats have made regime survival an end. Second, security of the state in its ideological identity is an end. (In this article, regime survival refers to protecting the sovereign control of the state against outside forces, whereas the security of the state focuses on protecting the political ideology of the state against internal forces.) Finally, reunification, though overshadowed by regime survival and state security for the foreseeable future, remains a persistent end.

Regime survival is an objective that extends to the Korean War era, but its prominence has been thrust to the forefront by various changes in the security environment, including the collapse of the Soviet Union and increased belligerence toward the regime exhibited by US policies. Among these policies are stricter arms controls, tighter monetary control in international financial transactions, and increased attention to human rights.¹¹³

Efforts to ensure regime survival are evident in North Korea's repeated attempts to receive assurances against the use of force from the United

States during bilateral and multilateral talks. These talks help highlight three avenues North Korea has pursued for ensuring its survival: a large *conventional military*, *nuclear weapons*, and *economic development*.

Conventional Military

North Korea maintains the fourth largest military in the world in terms of troop strength.¹¹⁴ A large number of these troops and their artillery are positioned near the DMZ. Originally regarded as a tool for reunification, there is little evidence to support this continued focus in the current environment. On the other hand, there is a clear reason to believe that the military now serves in the national interest of deterrence and defense. This conclusion is based on five premises: (1) North Korea faces a credible opponent along the DMZ, (2) rhetoric from North Korea has maintained that the troops are for defense, (3) North Korea has worked with the South to defuse cross-DMZ conflicts, (4) the balance of military power and likely outcome of a war favors South Korea, and (5) the political environment in the South is no longer conducive to forced reunification.

First, the large US and South Korean military contingent along the DMZ compels the North to maintain a sizable military presence to defend against the possibility of attack. North Korea's insecurity along the DMZ is further justified by antagonistic statements from the Bush administration that have distinguished North Korea as a member of the "axis of evil" and one to which the president has taken a personal disliking: "I loathe Kim Jong Il."¹¹⁵ North Korea is all too aware of the fate of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, also one of the axes of evil. These statements and actions along with the preemptive option the United States denotes in the *National Security Strategy* have encouraged an ongoing sense of insecurity in the North Korean regime.

Second, the use of the military as a defensive tool against outside aggressors has been a consistent thread in the North's habitual and aggressive blustering, with articles in the state-run media routinely praising the military for its role in defending socialism and sovereignty. The importance of this role is succinctly captured in the following 10 January 2007 KCNA article: "The practical experience gained by the DPRK proves that a country can prevent a war and protect its sovereignty and peace only when it attaches importance to the military affairs and bolsters its self-reliant defence capability."¹¹⁶ The defensive role of the military is also defined in North Korea's constitution: "The mission of the armed forces of the DPRK

is to safeguard the interests of the working people, to defend the socialist system and the gains of the revolution from aggression, and to protect the freedom, independence, and peace of the country.”¹¹⁷

Third, North Korea has taken steps to reduce military tensions along the DMZ. Though occasional unpredictable behavior is seen from the North, efforts seem to have produced some results. Pointing to North-South meetings and economic relations and describing the situation along the DMZ in the fall of 2006, one US Army captain stated that the situation was “the calmest it has ever been,” an assessment supported by Swedish major general Sture Theolin, who described the attitude on his visit to the north side of the DMZ as “more relaxed.”¹¹⁸ Indeed, though North Korea’s motives cannot fully be known, the North has in general made a good faith effort to reduce tensions along the DMZ through military talks. These talks have met with limited success, leading to an elimination of propaganda broadcasts along the DMZ and the establishment of a hotline to reduce the potential for naval clashes at sea.¹¹⁹

Fourth, the balance of power on the peninsula favors the South. Some experts argue that the North’s disproportionately larger troop strength and higher heavy equipment count favor in the North. However, even with the North’s numerical advantages, the military balance on the peninsula debatably favors the South. Specifically, much of North Korea’s equipment is old, with nearly all major weapons systems of 1960s vintage or older;¹²⁰ maintenance is questionable since much of the parts and equipment came from former allies whose regimes are no longer in power;¹²¹ and training has suffered through the economic slowdown (despite the “military first” policy).¹²² Even without the US military commitment, South Korea’s rapidly modernizing military is qualitatively far ahead of North Korea, while training and modernization continue to be fueled by an economy that is 20 times larger than the North’s.¹²³

Finally, North Korea lacks support for military action. Unlike his father who had fought against Japanese colonialism in Manchuria, Kim Jong Il does not enjoy the same close personal and historical relations with China’s leaders,¹²⁴ and, despite the mutual defense treaty, China has indicated that it would not provide support if the North were to run into trouble,¹²⁵ a decision likely influenced by China’s close economic ties with the South and its need to maintain the perception of “peaceful development.” With the former Soviet Union, close security ties have been replaced by modest diplomatic relations focused on mutual economic interests.

If North Korea's regime survival could somehow be guaranteed, one might conclude that the DMZ could be disestablished. However, there is another role the military could be perceived as playing along the border: immigration enforcement and ideological preservation. Conventional forces along the border act to keep South Korean culture out and the North Korean population in.

Nuclear Weapons

North Korea has consistently stated its desire for a denuclearized Korean peninsula. This interest has been repeated under both Kim Il Sung and the current Kim Jong Il regime in various agreements and statements. North Korea first signed a declaration with South Korea in 1991, agreeing in principle to a nuclear-free peninsula, and it has agreed to the same in nearly every subsequent security agreement.¹²⁶ This agreement was preceded by a unilateral good faith gesture from the United States announcing the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from South Korea in order to pave the way for successful talks.¹²⁷ Even during North Korea's announced withdrawal from the NPT in 2003, North Korea stated, "We have no intention to produce nuclear weapons."¹²⁸ Yet, the evidence available unequivocally indicates that *North Korea is committed to the development of nuclear weapons* as a tool for regime survival, contrary to its publicly stated policy.

Biding its time under each new agreement, North Korea has deliberately and secretly pursued nuclear weapons. Agreements to halt its program have not dampened the North's appetite for the bomb. Under the 1994 Agreed Framework, North Korea agreed to IAEA monitoring of plutonium nuclear facilities in exchange for various economic concessions. It should be noted that, even with generous concessions, North Korea didn't consent to the agreement of its own free will. Only under an ultimatum of force in which the United States revealed its intent to strike nuclear facilities did the North capitulate. Unable to continue on its current path for nuclear weapons development, North Korea responded by turning its attention to a covert uranium enrichment program, acquiring centrifuges and technical assistance with the aid of Pakistani nuclear physicist Dr. A. Q. Khan from 1997 through 2001.¹²⁹

In an official statement in February 2005, North Korea announced that it had nuclear weapons, stating that it had "manufactured nukes for self-defence."¹³⁰ This statement was followed up 18 months later with North Korea's first nuclear test. In announcing the successful test, a spokesman

for the Foreign Ministry stated that the nuclear test was “entirely attributable to the US nuclear threat, sanctions and pressure.”¹³¹ North Korea has gained a sympathetic ear in Russia and China, where the governments have placed blame on US policies for North Korea’s nuclear weapons program.¹³² With weapons in hand, North Korea now states that “the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula [was Kim Il Sung’s] dying wish.”¹³³

It is hard to say that North Korea has missed a heartbeat in pushing ahead nuclear weapons development. Actions clearly contradictory to its statements provide sufficient evidence that North Korea is committed to possessing nuclear weapons. What remains to be answered is Can there be another reasonable argument other than regime survival for North Korea’s pursuit of nuclear weapons?

There are three possible reasons that stand out as to why North Korea would pursue nuclear weapons. The first involves guaranteeing regime survival, addressed above. The second is to use its nuclear program as a bargaining tool to gain US attention and draw economic and diplomatic concessions. The third is as a tool for reunification.

Many liberal pundits have argued that North Korea’s nuclear program is a call for help—a means of drawing the United States to the negotiating table for improved relations or economic assistance. This argument fails to recognize that the nuclear program dates back as early as the 1960s. Furthermore, it does not explain why, following the 1994 Agreed Framework in which the United States offered improved relations and economic aid, North Korea duplicitously pursued an alternative covert weapons program. More aptly, North Korea’s trade of its plutonium program for economic and diplomatic concessions from the United States can be explained as a necessity rather than an intentional effort on the part of the North. Kim Jong Il increasingly felt pressured by US rhetoric and military posturing as the United States privately announced its intentions to the North to strike nuclear facilities should the nuclear program continue. Backing up the threat was the deployment of strike fighter aircraft and an enhanced naval presence to South Korea.¹³⁴ Therefore, the “call for help” theory is not supported by the facts.

Regarding unification as an objective for its program, the rational choice theory would rule out a nuclear attack. North Korea would be virtually guaranteed a swift military response from the international community, including China. However, one conservative proposes a case in which military action could be perceived as rational. Using a “double-or-nothing” logic, if a rational North Korea were to feel it had nothing left to lose, it may take the gamble.¹³⁵ While theoretically possible, it is hard to see a

double-or-nothing situation grave enough beyond a preemptive strike by the United States that would lead North Korea to take such a gamble. Of course, that would lead us back to regime survival.

Economic Development

Economic development is at the core of regime survival. North Koreans view US economic policy toward their country as an attempt to collapse their government and, therefore, look to economic self-reliance as one means through which they can “frustrat[e] the vicious sanctions and blockade of the imperialists and reactionaries and achiev[e] a victory in the offensive for the building of an economic power.”¹³⁶

Ideologically, North Korea desires a national economic model based on self-reliance. Economic dependence is viewed as a weakness: “To try to build national economy through the introduction of unreliable foreign capital is little short of giving [a] trump card to capital investors.”¹³⁷ However, the realities of the economic situation have made North Korea dependent on donor nations for its survival. The loss of Soviet donor support and unreliable support from China have created economic hardships for North Korea. These economic problems have been compounded by internal food shortages and the recent US crackdown on North Korean financial transactions in the international banking system. Finally, Japanese government control over trade and cash remittances from Japanese-Koreans add to the North’s economic woes.

Internally, the economic plight has caused the military to assume a central role in economic development. A 2004 KCNA notes that “economic construction by the *Songun* political mode means putting forward the People’s Army as a core and main force and carrying out economic construction by the concerted efforts of the army and people.”¹³⁸ (emphasis added) *Songun*, or the “military first” policy as it is commonly known, conceptually postulates that regime survival can only be guaranteed by developing and giving priority to a strong military force. Softening the military to divert funds to other activities would lead to an eventual collapse of the system. Though the idea of using the military for economic development did not appear in the earliest mentions of *Songun*, North Korea appears to have realized economic viability cannot be sustained with the military-first policy as it stands. Therefore, as described in the above quote, North Korea has tasked the military with carrying out or directing various agricultural and industrial tasks to build economic capacity.

North Korea's response to external efforts to use economic leverage to draw down the regime has been mixed. On one hand, North Korea has been forced to reach out to international investment, contrary to its own ideology. Some of the most significant economic forays include opening Mount Kumgang as a tourist resort in cooperation with the South;¹³⁹ launching a large industrial park in Kaesong—also a joint project with South Korea—which once fully completed in 2012 is expected to employ a half million North Koreans;¹⁴⁰ initiating the Najin-Sonbong economic zone in cooperation with China to test market economics;¹⁴¹ and negotiating with Russia and South Korea to reopen the railroad connections.

On the other hand, North Korea has increased its attention to its own strengths—illicit activities and military hardware sales—to draw in capital. Illicit activities have included drug trading, counterfeiting, and money laundering. North Korea negatively reacted to US accusations of money laundering, stalling Six-Party Talks from September 2005 until December 2006 after the US Treasury Department acted against the Banco Delta Macau.¹⁴²

Not surprisingly, in Six-Party Talks and bilateral negotiations, in conjunction with its demands for a security guarantee, North Korea has consistently pushed for three main economic concessions: energy, food, and fertilizer. These demands reflect the dire economic situation in North Korea and, along with the above-mentioned economic activities, are designed to keep the regime alive.

Reunification of the Korean Peninsula is a long-stated goal of the North Korean government. As early as 1948, the constitution had designated Seoul, not Pyongyang, as the capital,¹⁴³ followed shortly after by an attempt to reunify the country by force. Since then, various indirect attempts have been made to subvert the government of the South to bring about reunification, including the 1983 assassination attempt of then-president Chun Doo Hwan.¹⁴⁴

In 1993, Kim Il Sung published a reunification roadmap, “10-Point Programme of the Great Unity of the Whole Nation for the Reunification of the Country,” which outlined a “one country, two systems” policy and called on both sides to put aside differences for the realization of reunification.¹⁴⁵ Beyond a public relations coup to gain a receptive audience in the South, it is not clear what North Korea had hoped to gain from this roadmap since, by the North's own account, the two systems are inherently contradictory and incompatible, described as a difference “between revolution and counterrevolution.”¹⁴⁶

In 1998, a new constitution was approved stating, “The DPRK shall strive to . . . reunify the country on the principle of independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity,” repeating the theme of past constitutions.¹⁴⁷ Adding to this, the official Web site of the DPRK describes the government’s main task as “to achieve total socialism in North Korea and get the peaceful unification of South Korea rejecting the external forces.”¹⁴⁸

Based on the above information and actions, there is ample evidence to indicate that reunification remains a national interest of the North. However, North Korea shows no intent of giving up its system of government to facilitate unification. North Korea also lacks the international legitimacy and military capability for reunification by force. Therefore, reunification for the time being has been relegated to an intensive information operations campaign against the South Korean government and pro-US elements in the South, with the focus of this campaign targeted at the economically poor, the idealistic youth, and the politically disenfranchised population of the South by exhorting the values of the North Korean system and promoting and encouraging anti-US and anticonservative activities. To this end, the KCNA regularly publishes articles identifying “corrupt” politics in the South, denigrating the economic policies, and praising the “nationalistic spirit” of the young generation.¹⁴⁹

External forces are not the only forces with which North Korea must contend. Even if external threats were to vanish overnight, the regime would have to continue to manage its own population. North Korea invests heavily in maintaining a structured internal environment, with ideological control as its primary tool.

It is difficult to exaggerate the role ideology plays in North Korean politics and society. According to Kim Jong Il, “The ideological transformation for all the members of society . . . is the most important of tasks and should be carried out as a matter of priority in defending and completing the cause of socialism.”¹⁵⁰ The relation of ideology to state security is highlighted in many of Kim Jong Il’s published writings. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kim Jong Il wrote, “Slighting ideological work when building socialism amounts to overlooking the key to socialism,” adding that the state must “give priority to ideological work over everything else.”¹⁵¹ Therefore, the collapse of the Soviet Union was merely an example of the failure of the communist regime in preparing the masses ideologically and allowing “imperialist” culture to corrupt: “The former Soviet Union and east European socialist countries collapsed not because

their military and economic potentials were weak and the level of their cultural development was low. It was entirely because they opened the door wide for the imperialist ideological and cultural poisoning.”¹⁵²

North Korea has been known to take extreme measures to enforce ideological behaviors, incarcerating its people in reeducation camps for seemingly minor infractions.¹⁵³ Such actions reflect the importance that North Korea gives to enforcing ideology to maintain state security.

On occasion, North Korea has found it necessary for humanitarian or other reasons to deviate from its own ideological principles. The mass starvation in the mid-1990s was one such example. However, when the crisis subsided, North Korea quickly moved to push out aid workers to prevent ideological corruption despite aid workers’ insistence that continued aid was necessary. This seemingly contrary behavior should not come as a surprise from a socialist country. Describing socialism in Russia, George Kennan in “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” wrote, “When there is something the Russians want from us, one or the other of these features of their policy may be thrust temporarily into the background.”¹⁵⁴ For North Korea, these actions are designed to prevent the ideological dilution of society.

Comparing US Interests to the Group of Four

Terrorism

All countries analyzed share a common interest in combating terrorism and agree on the need for international cooperation and information. However, a significant divide appears when determining whether North Korea is a terrorist state. South Korea, China, and Russia contend that North Korea is not. On the other hand, the United States and Japan classify North Korea as a terrorist concern, seeming to indicate an insurmountable difference. However, further evaluation of information reveals ambiguity in the United States’ and Japan’s positions.

The continued presence of North Korea on the Department of State’s state sponsor of terrorism (SPOT) list is linked at least in part to the Japanese abductee issue and at Japan’s insistence. Actively seeking support from the United States, Japan contends that removal from this list should not occur until this issue is resolved. Yet, simultaneously, Japan officially

acknowledges that there has been no record of terrorist involvement by North Korea since 1987.¹⁵⁵

Also contributing to North Korea's presence on the SPOT list is the North's transfer of missile technology to other countries identified as SPOTs and to its continued harboring of airline hijackers from the 1987 incident.¹⁵⁶ Even on these issues, the US position has been shaky in recent years. On several occasions over the past decade, the United States has expressed a willingness to commence removal of North Korea from the list as a concession to progress in Six-Party Talks on nuclear weapons, reigning in efforts when talks fail to progress.¹⁵⁷ Therefore, it is more apt that the continued inclusion of North Korea on the SPOT list is only slightly more than a bargaining chip at the WMD negotiating table.

WMD Proliferation

A clear pattern exists in the strategies that various countries take to address WMD proliferation. The Group of Four unanimously agrees that WMDs should be approached from a multilateral cooperative effort that includes information sharing, and all but one indicate a preference for tightening of existing arms control regimes. Though not specifically addressed in ROK strategy documents, having consistently supported the implementation of arms control regimes in the past, it is unlikely that South Korea would be opposed to any action to strengthen the regime.

The more contentious issues in addressing WMD proliferation are in the use of economic and military instruments of power. Following the 9 October nuclear test, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1718 condemning the test and authorizing sanctions against the North. Among the many guidelines, the resolution stipulates that states should take action necessary to prevent the shipment of restricted goods into and out of North Korea. Japan and the United States have showed a significant commitment to enforcing the articles, favoring aggressive enforcement of existing arms control regimes and participating in initiatives to prevent the proliferation of WMDs such as the PSI. China and Russia have both indicated that they would not participate in the interdiction of aircraft or shipping to enforce the sanctions on North Korea, and South Korea has similarly expressed a strong unwillingness to participate.¹⁵⁸

Beyond the Security Council resolution, South Korea, China, and Russia have shown general opposition to actions that apply economic and financial pressure to North Korea, while the United States and Japan have favored

such pressures. South Korea's unwillingness stems from an interest not to undo progress made separately in inter-Korean talks. China's motivation is arguably driven by a desire to avoid a flood of economic refugees that would likely result from a tightening of financial and economic sanctions. Some strategists also argue that China is concerned actions that may lead to a collapse of the North could ultimately lead to a peninsula unified under pro-Western South Korea, thus opening up another front in a future US-China conflict. This point, though somewhat valid, is exaggerated since China and South Korea have become economically connected with South Korea being China's fifth largest export destination and second largest import source. Turned around, China is South Korea's largest trade partner, both in exports and imports.¹⁵⁹ It also neglects that South Korean sentiment toward China is the same as that toward the United States.¹⁶⁰

Regional Stability

Attaining regional stability follows a congruous effort between the five parties. All nations indicate a strong desire for a multilateral regional approach to addressing the problem in lieu of bilateral or international efforts. Not surprisingly, South Korea, faced with a military threat on the DMZ and a simultaneous desire to socially unite its people of common history and ancestry, also finds bilateral cooperation to be central to stability of the peninsula, a position not favored by any of the other actors.

Both Japan and South Korea view economic assistance as playing a critical role in the stabilization of northeast Asia. However, despite the seeming commonality between the two, Japan has shown little commitment to economic assistance when it comes to North Korea, instead focusing developmental assistance in more friendly countries. On the other hand, South Korea's economic assistance to the North has been reasonably steadfast considering the bad faith North Korea has displayed in negotiations, which has often resulted in a backlash from conservatives in the South. The remarkable success in continuing this assistance results from a desire to prevent snags in negotiations from unduly hindering progress in the development of inter-Korean relations. Recognizing the progress made through inter-Korean dialogue, South Korea announced intentions to continue its economic relations with the North regardless of the progress on denuclearization.¹⁶¹

Human Dignity

Addressing human dignity is a unique challenge. Though countries may agree in principle on the means to address infringement on human dignity, ideological and cultural differences create different interpretations of human rights. Furthermore, efforts to promote human rights are often sidelined by more pressing and palpable self-interests.

While the United States, Japan, South Korea, and Russia find common ground in supporting diplomatic pressure to North Korea, in practice each country has acted variedly. South Korea is inconspicuous in applying diplomatic pressure to avoid potential detrimental consequences to inter-Korean relations. Similarly, Russia's commitment to diplomatic pressure has also yet to be proven. With its socialist history and own economic problems and social ills, Russia sees little interest in promoting idealistic goals of advancing human dignity abroad. Indeed, the two remaining countries willing to apply diplomatic pressure are also the two democracies that propose partnering with other democracies.

Japan and South Korea have both shown willingness for bilateral talks over human rights issues with North Korea. In general, these talks are narrowly focused to address the issue of abductees or ROK POWs. While their means diverges with the US approach, it is unlikely a substantive concern to the United States and is probably welcomed as a means in supporting overall diplomatic pressure.

A clear divide exists in the use of informational and economic instruments of power. South Korea, China, and Russia do not include either as a national strategy, whereas the United States and Japan have both indicated such in their national strategies and have implemented them. Both the United States and Japan launched an aggressive awareness campaign aimed at exposing North Korea's human rights abuses to the international community.

Economic Development

With the exception of Russia, all countries place economic development of poor nations as one of their national strategies. The United States, Japan, China, and South Korea all support coordination of development assistance through established multilateral and international institutions such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) or the United Nations Development Program.

Though the United States and Japan both provide for economic assistance in their strategies, each has placed conditions that the North must

meet before economic development assistance can take place. For the United States, this condition is “good behavior,” whereas Japan refuses to provide any aid until North Korea resolves the abductee issue.

South Korea and China have approached the North with comparatively “unconditional” economic development assistance. South Korea has pushed inter-Korean development assistance to create interdependence between the two countries as part of the comprehensive effort to build confidence and reduce tensions on the peninsula. China, too, has pushed bilateral economic development on the peninsula, possibly to reduce the number of economic refugees, tap into North Korea’s natural resources, or reach the cheap, educated labor force.

Part of the United States’ economic development strategy is to disrupt illicit activities that are deemed counter to effective economic growth. This position is incongruous with priorities for the other nations and poses challenges for developing support for the US position in poorer economies such as China and Russia.

Combining means in a visual depiction of flags in tables 1 and 2 readily shows that Japan is the United States’ strongest partner. Separately, Russia and China can be grouped as nations with means complementary to each other, while South Korea is caught in between, finding itself generally siding with China and Russia in means.

Table 1 shows that Japan can play a role as a key partner in addressing any US interest. In general, China and Russia can play a significant role in addressing both regional stability and WMD proliferation but are poor partners in addressing human dignity. South Korea is also a poor partner in addressing human dignity and does not well support the US approach to regional stability.

Looking at the instruments of national power to address North Korea, Table 2 shows there is general agreement on the way diplomacy should be used, whereas a cooperative approach to interests using the economic instrument of power would be difficult. Finally, the military instrument of power is generally lacking of support from regional partners.


























































































































Comparing US Interests to North Korean Interests

The concerns about WMD proliferation and human dignity are the most difficult interests to address. The proliferation of WMDs is arguably

Table 1. Complementary and Conflicting Means of Various Countries to US Means by Interest

<i>Interest</i>		<i>Means</i>		<i>Complementary</i>		<i>Conflicting</i>	
Proliferation	Diplomatic	Multilateral Cooperation	●	●	●	●	●
	Economic	Arms Control Regimes	●	●	●	●	●
		Economic Sanctions	●	●	●	●	●
		Financial Restrictions	●	●	●	●	●
Information	Information Sharing	●	●	●	●	●	
	Military	Physical Enforcement	●	●	●	●	
Regional Stability	Diplomatic	Regional Diplomacy	●	●	●	●	
		International Diplomacy	●	●	●	●	
	Economic	Bilateral Cooperation	●	●	●	●	
		Economic Assistance	●	●	●	●	
Information	None	●	●	●	●		
Military	None	●	●	●	●		
Human Dignity	Diplomatic	Diplomatic Pressure	●	●	●	●	
		Partner with Democracies	●	●	●	●	
	Economic	Bilateral Talks	●	●	●	●	
		Economic Sanctions	●	●	●	●	
		Awareness Campaign	●	●	●	●	
Military	None	●	●	●	●		
Economic Development	Diplomatic	Coordination w/Institutions	●	●	●	●	
	Economic	Economic Assistance	●	●	●	●	
		Information	None	●	●	●	
	Military	Disrupt Illicit Activities	●	●	●	●	

Table 2. Complementary and Conflicting Means of Various Countries to US Means by Instrument of Power

<i>Interest</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>Complementary</i>		<i>Conflicting</i>		
Diplomatic	Proliferation	 	 			
	Regional Stability	Arms Control Regimes	 	 		
		Regional Diplomacy	 	 		
		International Diplomacy	 	 		
		Bilateral Cooperation	 	 		
	Human Dignity	Diplomatic Pressure	 	 		
		Partner with Democracies	 	 		
		Bilateral Talks	 	 		
	Economic Development	Coordination w/Institution	 	 		
	Economic	Proliferation	 	 		
Regional Stability		Financial Restrictions	 	 		
		Economic Assistance	 	 		
Human Dignity		Economic Sanctions	 	 		
		Economic Sanctions	 	 		
Economic Development		Economic Assistance	 	 		
		None				
Information	Proliferation	 	 			
	Regional Stability	 	 			
	Human Dignity	 	 			
Military	Human Dignity	Awareness Campaign	 			
		None				
	Proliferation	Physical Enforcement	 	 		
	Regional Stability	None				
Economic Development	Human Dignity	None				
	Disrupt Illicit Activities	 	 			

the United States' foremost interest on the Korean peninsula as indicated by the time and effort put forth in addressing it. However, North Korea views possession of nuclear weapons as inherent to the long-term survival of the regime. An even more frank assessment from the regime is the statement from the office of the foreign ministry following its nuclear test in 2006: "The DPRK was compelled to substantially prove its possession of nukes to protect its sovereignty and right to existence."¹⁶² Those who would believe that North Korea's decision to shut down its nuclear reactor is proof that North Korea and the United States have turned a corner in relations are too eager to embrace the likelihood of a country to give up a nuclear arsenal it spent five decades lying and deceiving to conceal. Instead, we offer two other possibilities. First, North Korea's nuclear reactor is nearly obsolete, having been built in the 1960s, and has fulfilled its purpose of producing enough weapons-grade plutonium for several nuclear bombs. The facility, therefore, may be viewed as expendable for much-needed short-term economic gain. A second possibility is that negotiations may be a ploy to allow North Korea to bide its time through the end of the Bush administration. By dragging out negotiations and feigning commitment to agreements, as it has done so often in the past, North Korea may look to survive through the administration in hopes of finding a softer counterpart in Bush's successor. Fortunately, for Kim Jong Il, many of the Bush advisors who would see past the regime's attempt at fooling the United States have been purged from the administration over the past two years, replaced by those who are willing to overlook history and believe that North Korea is genuinely ready to cooperate with the international community.

Human dignity, as defined by the United States, conflicts with regime survival, state security, and reunification. The promotion of human dignity is tantamount to ending communist socialism and establishing democracy, thus conflicting with regime survival. Internally, North Korea finds it a necessary part of the socialist fabric to "reeducate" dissenters or even those who attempt to leave the North for economic reasons. Promoting human dignity would equate to a direct challenge to state security by opening up the government to scrutiny. It would further undermine the North's political ideology and its vision of reunification.

While US concerns over both nuclear proliferation and human dignity conflict with North Korean interests, US interests of regional stability and economic development provide opportunities for progress. In spite of the

possibility that North Korea may perceive to benefit from regional instability, regional stability can directly contribute to regime survival and reunification by reducing the perceived threats to the North while setting the proper atmosphere for eventual reunification. (This does not imply that the preferred end states of each country are desirable to the other. Clearly, reunification for North Korea means reunification under its system of government—an outcome unacceptable to both the United States and South Korea. Nonetheless, opportunities that increase regional stability, such as talks to reduce tensions along the DMZ or other inter-Korean exchange, also complement North Korea's goal of moving toward reunification.) The challenge in addressing regional stability depends on the context in which viewed. From a militarization standpoint along the DMZ, regional stability is attainable with confidence-building initiatives and a reduction of forces on both sides. However, when intertwined with the problem of nuclear-armed missiles pointed at the North's neighbors, regional stability and resolving WMD proliferation become inseparable.

Economic development would enhance regime survival by expanding the legitimate business practices and contributions of North Korea in the global community. Adding to this, economic development would reduce poverty and the subsequent disaffection of the public. The unique challenge for the North would be in maintaining its ideological control over the population (keep out "corrupt" Western values) while promoting greater international involvement in its economy. Finally, economic development would contribute to closing the economic gap between the North and South, a necessary precursor to smooth reunification. Among several possible approaches to economic development, North Korea could be encouraged to follow the Chinese model, thus allowing it to maintain its communist central government while promoting a gradual expansion of capitalist ideas. North Korea has shown interest in the past, having set up a special economic zone in the Rajin-Sonbong area. Unfortunately, plagued by its past defaults on credit payments and inadequate basic infrastructure to support businesses, North Korea was unable to attract significant investment. One exception has been investment by South Korea in the Mount Kumgang and Kaesong ventures. By guaranteeing private investments of South Korean firms in North Korea, South Korea has been able to attract many businesses into risky ventures with the North. Similarly, the United States would have to stimulate investment by providing guarantees to companies willing to invest in North Korea and by lifting restrictions

on North Korean access to international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. While these actions may not be politically popular in the West, each step toward establishing international economic exchange with North Korea increases awareness of the general North Korean population to the outside world, expands the international community's ability to influence change in North Korea, and increases the economic stakes for North Korea on actions counter to regional stability.

Recognizing the opportunities and challenges these interests present is critical. In this case, the most difficult interest to address, WMD proliferation, is also the greatest security interest. Tackling the problem head-on has yielded negative results, while other interests have been ignored. Plaguing both sides on the issue is mutual distrust. By choosing to address complementary interests, these interests become "entry-level" tasks acting as confidence builders necessary to reach the more complex conflicting interests that require deeper trust and confidence. As such, the United States must be willing to accept limited progress in conflicting interests while forging ahead with complementary interests.

Conclusions

Constructive engagement with US partners on various common security interests related to North Korea is extremely challenging. The challenges and opportunities in addressing US interests expand with each new country added to the problem-solving process. Each country introduces a set of unique interests and, sometimes, divergent means and ulterior motives that can end up complicating efforts. On the other hand, the opportunity for mutual support and cooperation can lead to unprecedented leveraging of instruments of power and burden sharing, enhancing likelihood of a desirable outcome. Therefore, the challenge is in identifying real interests and aligning efforts with partners in such a manner that addressing one problem contributes to efforts in addressing another. This process recognizes that many issues are intrinsically interlinked, and success in addressing one may fall incumbent on progress in another. For example, WMD proliferation weighs heavily on regional stability; regional stability can only flourish with economic stability; and economic stability is difficult to develop in a country where the basic elements of human dignity, such as the sharing of ideas and the ability to move freely, are not protected.

Recognizing the problems it has encountered in leading efforts to address its interests regarding North Korea, the United States should give the lead to a regional player that has common interests, can be trusted and influenced, and has a record of success in engaging the North. South Korea has made considerable progress in addressing some of the common security interests through soft diplomatic and economic means. Though costly, this approach has shown positive results in opening up the North. In addition, South Korea is a democratic state and a close US ally with a strong vested interest on the peninsula. Therefore, the United States should give the lead to South Korea in addressing common security interests, using the following guidelines in supporting lead-country efforts.

First, addressing terrorism cooperatively with partners has no hope of progress with the weak explanation the United States provides for North Korean terrorism concerns. North Korea's continued presence on the state sponsors of terrorism list is intrinsically linked to the Japanese abductees issue and WMD negotiations vice terrorism in its own right. This contention is supported by the absence of mention of North Korea in the terrorism chapter of the *NSS*. Defensibly, one can argue that the US position on terrorism as it relates to North Korea is not far off from China, Russia, and South Korea in that *North Korea does not pose a terrorist threat*, a position to which all three countries will hold steadfast. Hence, attempts to encourage cooperative engagement with the three countries in the framework of combating the North Korean terrorist threat will be for naught. Indeed, even the United States has shown no real interest in addressing North Korean terrorism in its own right.

Based on the weak premise under which North Korea is listed as a sponsor of terrorism, serious attempts to address this interest directly will falter. North Korea's continued presence on the state sponsor of terrorism list is more aptly a political tool to use as leverage in addressing other interests, and removal from the list will follow accordingly when diplomatically expedient. Therefore, *addressing terrorism in its own right is not necessary*.

Secondly, addressing human dignity holds little hope for immediate and direct progress. It is the most difficult interest to address, complicated by different definitions of human rights between partners and a general lack of willingness of many countries to involve themselves in the affairs of other sovereign states. The United States' strategy has been the use of economic sanctions to pressure North Korea into improving human rights. However, sanctions run counter to the United States' economic development interests

and are counterintuitive to the goal of improving regional stability. Furthermore, US attempts to promote human dignity are in conflict with both North Korea's interests of regime stability and state security. Hence, attempts to force North Korea into compliance will have the opposite effect, with the North hardening its position and further closing society, inadvertently decreasing regional stability and deepening human rights abuses. With little promise for immediate progress in addressing human rights and the lack of cooperation with other regional players, the United States should seek a gradual change in North Korean human rights behavior by linking it to US interests complementary to North Korean interests.

Thirdly, progress on addressing WMD proliferation, though of great interest to all partners, will not come until basic trust in other areas is established with North Korea. WMD proliferation is the most contentious issue facing the United States. Unlike terrorism, in the context of North Korea all parties recognize the proliferation of nuclear weapons as an issue that must be addressed. However, it is at this point of agreement that views rapidly diverge. The countries are polarized into two groups, with China, Russia, and South Korea staunchly supporting diplomatic efforts for addressing nuclear weapons proliferation, and the United States and Japan favoring a full array of diplomatic, economic, and police-enforcement efforts to resolve the problem.

China's policy reflects a long-standing commitment to noninterference in the sovereign affairs of other states in accordance with "The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence." Furthermore, China is likely averse to actions that might aggravate the already precarious economic situation in the North, which could precipitate an economic crisis with a flood of economic refugees crossing the Yalu River into China. Then there is the prospect of a unified peninsula, allied with the West, along the Chinese border.

South Korea maintains a noninterference policy analogous to China's national policy. This policy is reinforced by the South's sunshine policy toward the North. South Korea also shares China's concern that an economic collapse in the North would be costly. Furthermore, excessive coercion would threaten to undo the goodwill South Korea has worked 10 years to build—efforts that have led to the reconnection of a railway across the DMZ and the establishment of a tourism zone and an industrial park in the North.

Russia has steadfastly argued that only a diplomatic solution can solve the North Korean problem and has placed the blame on US international

aggression for North Korea's behavior. Based on Russian attitudes, Russian policy will continue to fall in line with the policies of China and South Korea.


Not surprisingly, history has also shown that resolution of WMD proliferation will not be simple. Despite attempts to resolve the issue and improve relations in the 1990s, North Korea continued to pursue a nuclear weapons program. Unfortunately, ignoring the interest and hoping the problem will fade away is not a choice. The stakes are too high. North Korea has already developed long-range missiles that could potentially place nuclear weapons on US soil, and the continued relevance of the NPT has come into question by North Korea's actions. Facing unlikely support from China, Russia, and South Korea for a hard-line approach and recognizing the conflicting interests WMDs represent to the United States and North Korea, *proliferation would best be addressed in conjunction with other interests.*

Fourthly, regional stability, though complicated by the divergent means of Six-Party Members, holds great promise for progress and, along with economic development, can provide a foundation from which to build upon for addressing human dignity and WMD proliferation. Regional stability is divided into three issues. The first is the proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles, which has already been addressed. The second is the economic situation, which is discussed later. The third issue is the military threat North Korea poses by its million-man army along the DMZ.

Based on the mutual benefits to be gained by the United States and North Korea and by the alignment of means of the Group of Four with the United States toward a regional diplomatic approach in addressing stability on the peninsula, there is a great opportunity for cooperation in addressing the military threat on the peninsula. This is not meant to oversimplify the problem of greater regional stability. Beyond the issues addressed in this paper, BMD, Taiwan-China relations, and Japan's wartime past all provide challenges to cooperation. Nonetheless, on the peninsula itself, from the perspective of North Korea, the DMZ has become a deterrent against US and South Korean military action and an immigration border keeping South Korean culture from polluting North Korean ideology and preventing the mass migration of poverty-stricken North Koreans to the wealthy South. The North has shown significant restraint along the DMZ in preventing an escalation of tensions, even following isolated firefights, despite the antagonistic rhetoric that follows. In addressing the role the

conventional military threat has on regional stability, *the United States should leverage regional players in a lead role on reducing tensions on the peninsula proper. In addition, regional stability should be a cornerstone for addressing other US national security interests.*

Finally, economic development is a bright spot for future success. Economic development is complementary to North Korean interests, contributing to regime stability and state security, and is viewed as mutually beneficial by China, Japan, and South Korea. China and Japan have both taken a bilateral approach to development, making inroads that have been impossible with the use of hard power.

Recognizing the success and the need to carry on with economic engagement, South Korea announced intentions to continue its economic relations with the North regardless of the progress on denuclearization. The interaction with North Korea in economic development has increased contact with North Koreans that will, over time, loosen the ideological grip the North has on its people. Therefore, *the United States should encourage and support economic development as a cornerstone in a broader approach to addressing other US national security interests.* 

Notes

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