Policy Forum 04-31A: Another Engagement Strategy For North Korea

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Another Look at North Korea US Economic Diplomacy Toward North Korea

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Another Engagement Strategy For North Korea

by Ms. Marta J. Bailey

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Therefore, determine the enemy's plans and you will know which strategy will be successful and which will not.

Sun Tzu

At the conclusion of the six-party talks in Beijing last August, North Korea announced that there was no reason for further negotiations and that its only option was to continue its nuclear weapons development program. [1] The Beijing Summit was the first multilateral diplomatic effort aimed at heading off a nuclear crisis that became apparent in October 2002 when North Korea acknowledged restarting its nuclear program in violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework. In exchange for freezing the nuclear program, North Korea wants energy assistance, an end to sanctions, and security assurances from the United States through a nonaggression treaty. [2] The Bush administration regards these demands as "blackmail" and is unwilling to make concessions unless North Korea first dismantles its nuclear program. [3] More than six months later and after a second round of talks in Beijing, there continues to be a standoff between the United States and North Korea. [4] The stakes are high and now North Korea claims to have begun making bombs out of spent nuclear fuel rods. [5]

The Bush administration's hard line approach is understandable given the post-9/11 atmosphere of heightened apprehension and increased efforts to keep weapons of mass destruction (WMD) out of the hands of terrorists. As understandable as the approach may be, it does not appear to be working. A prolonged stalemate gives North Korea more time to develop its nuclear capability and increases the risk the weapons will be used. The gravity of the situation demands a thoughtful reassessment of the United States strategy toward North Korea within the context of long-range strategic goals for Asia. A successful strategy must consider the motivation for North Korea's behavior and plan the next steps in a way that is most likely to elicit responses that serve United States interests. The following assessment considers the strategic context, the national interests of each party, weighs risks and options, and proposes an integrated campaign strategy that features conditional engagement. As distasteful as it may be to deal with Kim Jong Il, the risks are too great to avoid him.

Weigh the situation, then move.

Sun Tzu

The Strategic Context

This is not the first time the world has held its breath in anticipation of the next move from the North Korean regime. For nearly 40 years the Korean peninsula served as a microcosm of the bi-polar, ideological struggle between communism and liberal democracies. Tensions met at the 38th parallel with the world's most concentrated array of military arms facing off under constant vigilance lest one side or the other make a move that would turn the ideological battle into a brutal confrontation. But the Cold War is over, and Kim Jong Il is still playing the same old game. His former communist allies have turned to market economies and some are making democratic reforms. Kim Jong Il is alone in the world, clinging to a Stalinist economy and his *Juche* ideology of nationalistic self-sufficiency with a totalitarian grip on his closed society and failing economy. His nuclear threats could almost be seen as comical were it not for the new strategic context which takes his game to a much more dangerous level.

With the complexities of the globalizing world and the asymmetrical threats arising from clashes of civilizations and non-state terrorist actors, one may long nostalgically for the good old days of the Cold War when at least we knew who and where the enemy was. Since 9/11, the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) has held center stage. But if terrorism is just a tool, then who and where is the enemy we are fighting? It is the very uncertainty of the answer to this question that makes North Korea's nuclear threat more than an issue of deterring North Korean aggression against South Korea or its Asian neighbors. In addition to wrangling welfare from a sympathetic world, Kim Jong Il engages in illegal activities such as drug smuggling, counterfeiting, and weapons dealing. [6] Regime survival is supported economically by offering commodities to the world's bad actors making Kim Jong Il a prime risk for proliferating WMD. His total unreliability in keeping past agreements to verifiably halt his nuclear program suggests that it will be difficult to develop a diplomatic package that will cause him to give up his "ace" in dealing with the rest of the world. [7] Like the unknown terrorists, the power that this one dictator of a small country has over the world's most powerful nation is most unsettling because it brings us face to face with our vulnerabilities and fears.

Nearly fifteen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the United States remains the world's lone superpower. Through most of the nineties, the United States struggled with this new role and how to use the power and responsibility with hesitant forays into places such as Somalia and Bosnia. The United States attracted both supporters and detractors as America's culture, politics, and values permeated a world that became more interconnected through advances in information technologies. The 9/11 wake-up call brought the post-Cold War United States role into much sharper relief. Under the new Bush administration, the previously hesitant superpower formulated a much more active role in shaping the world by fostering universal values, democracy, and free market economies. [8] Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, the world showed its empathy for the

United States with an outpouring of support for the United States led

war on terrorism. The initial gambit into Afghanistan to dislodge the Taliban regime was a direct

and logical target that brought support from many countries. In contrast, the war in Iraq with its goal of regime change and halting the production and proliferation of heretofore undiscovered WMD created a rift among allies and caused many to question the United States' wisdom in its use force.

The North Korean nuclear crisis emerges against this backdrop of growing hostility against western culture by Islamic fundamentalists, fear of further terrorist attacks on United States soil, divisiveness among longstanding allies, extended military commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, and wavering support for the administration in the early phases of the presidential election season. There is an expectation that the United States will demonstrate world leadership and facilitate a peaceful resolution to the North Korean issue in a way that is favorable both to the United States and Asia in the near term, but also in a way that lays the groundwork for building on the United States' long range strategic goals for Asia. The importance of the United States' hegemonic status cannot be underestimated as this diplomatic effort is considered. The world is watching and taking cues from United States policy moves, formulating its own future policies based on how the United States responds.

One ignorant of the plans of neighboring states cannot prepare alliances in good time.

Sun Tzu

The Regional Players

Since the end of the Cold War and again after 9/11, the dynamics of United States international relations have changed. Of particular importance in devising a strategy for North Korea are the changing relationships with China, Japan, South Korea, and Russia --- the nations involved in the six-party diplomatic negotiations along with North Korea and the United States. The Cold War enemies, China and Russia, are now allies with us in the GWOT and share our concerns regarding North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons. Japan, our post-World War II reconstruction project, has become a world economic leader while maintaining a pacifist military stance under a United States security protection guarantee that is of questionable effectiveness against a North Korean nuclear threat. Surprisingly it is South Korea, the traditional target of North Korean aggression, which feels least threatened by North Korea's nuclear program. It is worthwhile to examine more closely the context each of these countries brings to the North Korean problem since any strategy must balance near and long term strategic regional goals.

China

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China shares an 800-mile border with North Korea and in many ways has the most at stake with the emergence of a nuclear-capable North Korea. China would prefer to focus on its own economic development and build a reputation as a nation with regional influence and global respect, so North Korea is problematic for China in several ways. There is an historic alliance between the two communist countries that has become strained as China moved toward free-market reforms and North Korea lagged behind. The crisis puts China in an unwanted dilemma of finding an acceptable diplomatic position between an old ally and a new and valuable trading partner, with the goal of alienating neither. Although

China's priority is economic growth,

this is being accomplished under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CPP) and they do not want to give up power any time soon. The United States is pressing China to use its influence over North Korea to bring them in line with international standards of behavior. China denies having sufficient power over North Korea to do this, but also realizes accommodating the United States and playing a role in solving the crisis would further its regional and global status goals. So far, China has served as host for the six-party talks and may be more willing to exert influence over North Korea now that the United States has shown more favor toward China in the Taiwan issue. [9]

In some respects, China's decision on how to proceed will set an important precedent for future Sino-American relations. Since Nixon's historic visit to China in 1972, the relationship has vacillated between trust and mistrust, engagement and containment, market openness and sanctions. China's alignment with the United States in the GWOT ushered in a new phase of cooperation and optimism, but Cold War mistrust lingers in Washington over China's long range goals. As China's economy continues to develop and it is able to develop its military force in parallel, what are China's ultimate aims? If China accepts a role of responsible leadership in a multilateral setting and understands the importance to its own well-being of maintaining these peacefully integrated ties, it would give the United States cause to deepen the growing sentiments of trust.

In addition to the dilemma over the diplomatic role China can or will play is the impact of the outcome of the crisis on China. If North Korea will not give up its nuclear program, in addition to the increased global terrorist threat, it is possible South Korea and Japan will be compelled to develop nuclear arsenals adding an additional destabilizing regional factor that could override the tremendous diplomatic gains being made on the economic front. China also has a vested interest in maintaining the North Korean regime in order to protect its border from being flooded with refugees and so it sees little value in punitive measures that would cause the regime to implode. They already return a small but steady flow of refugees to North Korea and a massive flow would be

an economic burden China does not want. [10]

South Korea

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South Korea, a country we defended in the Korean War and have protected with United States troops for over 50 years, is chafing against the dependent relationship with the United Stares. A generation too young to remember or appreciate the value of the longstanding United States–South Korean relationship questions the relevance of United States military presence and sees the United States as an obstacle to reunification with the North. The Kim Dae Jung Sunshine Policy and meeting with Kim Jong Il in June 2000 raised South Korean hopes for the possibility of reunification. North Korea is now being seen as a country to be pitied rather than feared, and the idealistic nationalism of South Koreans may be obscuring their perception of the real threat that remains. In addition, they seem to consider North Korea their issue rather than one of global concern.

The depth of their desire for a peaceful reunification with North Korea was exhibited in the election of Roh Moo-Hyun who appealed to young voters on a platform that is less suspicious of the North and more critical of United States presence. [11] Yet Mr. Roh seems

to realize that

much like China, South Korea must weigh its allegiance to North Korea against the negative impacts it could have on their relationship with the United States. In his inaugural address, Mr. Roh defined North Korea's nuclear ambition as a "grave threat calling for a choice between either nuclear weapons or a security guarantee and economic aid." He also spoke highly of the "cherished" alliance with the United States and envisioned an alliance that would mature into a "more reciprocal and more equal" relationship. [12]

South Korea's request for a new formulation of the United States-South Korean relationship has merit, and addressing this issue will be a critical step in developing a synchronized strategy for North Korea. To maintain influence and a military presence in South Korea as part of a long-range Asian security strategy, and to keep a strong-alliance sentiment alive among the South Korean people, the United States must establish a relationship that eliminates any perceived vestiges of occupation or imperial oversight. The respect South Korea desires in a more equal relationship is well deserved. The United States is already taking steps to reposition troops currently located on former Japanese imperial grounds in Seoul to sites south of the Han River and pass security missions to the South Korean armed forces. [13]

South Korea's renewed interest in reunification comes at a time when it is economically powerful enough and politically secure enough to assist North Korea but, like China, fears a collapse of North Korea that would flood its borders with refugees. A more gradual approach of engagement, development of a federation, and eventual reunification is preferred by the South, whose overtures of assistance have yet to be accompanied by demands for reciprocal actions by North Korea. [14]

Critics charge that Kim Jong Il is once again on the take with no intention of letting the South draw him into a reunification plan of their design that would jeopardize his absolute control.

Japan

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For Japan, the North Korean threat is real. In 1998 North Korea launched a Taepodong missile over Japan that demonstrated Pyongyang's capability to deliver conventional, chemical, biological and now potentially nuclear warheads to the Japanese mainland. Japan would like a peaceful and stable Korean peninsula, but is constrained in its ability to directly impact change. According to its constitution, it is committed to a pacifist military position and relies on United States security protection. [15] The threat posed by North Korea, however, brings the effectiveness of this security arrangement into question and has caused Japan to reassess its national security arrangements and consider a more assertive policy. Japan has an interest in acquiring a ballistic missile defense system, and a few observers have gone as far as to suggest that nuclear weapons could be considered if Japan is sufficiently provoked. An expansion of its military scope is already taking place as Japan shifts form a purely defensive posture to accept an international role in fighting terrorism by assisting in the GWOT with logistical and other non-combat support. [16]

Japan has tried to influence North Korea through diplomatic and economic means, but even these efforts have stalled. Japan was a major financial contributor to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) project that was part of the now-defunct 1994 Agreed Framework. Over 600,000 ethnic North Koreans live in Japan and

are an important source of

financial support to Pyongyang. In an historic meeting between Japanese and North Korean leaders in September 2002, the signing of the Pyongyang Agreement seemed to signal a shift toward increased engagement, but progress was derailed when North Korea admitted to abducting Japanese citizens. The North returned some of them but the Japanese public became obsessed with this issue and it has overshadowed further engagement. The Japanese public wants action on the abduction issue and this causes a dilemma for Japanese negotiators in setting priorities. [17]

Historically, the Korean peninsula has been viewed as a "dagger aimed at the heart of Japan." [18] Japan remains supportive of United States policy and an important participant in multilateral diplomatic efforts. Even as the United States-Japanese relationship matures and evolves both sides agree that the ties that bind the United States and Japan are critical to maintain. Japan's security and our influence in the region depend upon it.

Russia

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Russia was one of North Korea's key communist allies and a primary source of economic aid until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then, Russia's power and influence has diminished considerably. There was a sharp deterioration in Russian relations with North Korea after Moscow normalized relations with Seoul in 1990. Still, their shared history and common border give Russia a role and their participation adds additional legitimacy to the multinational diplomatic efforts to influence North Korea through the six-party talks. Although they still have some influence, it has been suggested that they may be reluctant to overplay their hand. [19]

Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy.

Sun Tzu

What Does North Korea Want?

North Korea's closed society has always posed a challenge to those looking for clues to guide the development of an effective foreign policy strategy. We know that North Korea is a highly militarized society that devotes 20-25% of its GDP to maintaining the world's fifth largest military, [20] an indication that regime security is an extremely high priority. North Korea is the "world's last remaining unreformed Stalinist state" and has survived the death of Kim Il Sung, its beloved leader of 50 years, and a three-year famine that left the country on the verge of economic collapse. [21]

To the surprise of some, Kim Jong Il held the regime together. The "Dear Leader" is an enigma to the western world. He reportedly has a "xenophobic insistence on total national self-reliance" and his bizarre behavior has caused some to question his mental stability, while other intelligence reports suggest he possesses a brilliant and cunning mind. [22] What is most puzzling in the current situation is that the nuclear program was initiated just as Kim Jong Il was taking unprecedented steps that seemed to indicate North Korea was finally emerging from its isolation. In the past few years, Kim Jong Il met with

neighboring country leaders, sent 600 athletes to

the Asian Games in South Korea, and made credible economic market reforms.

[23] The question, then, that plagues strategists is determining North Korea's intent. Three possible explanations for North Korea's reinstatement of their nuclear program can be considered.

First, North Korea's nuclear program could be a legitimate reaction to what it perceives as a serious threat. In the January 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush referred to North Korea as a member of the "axis of evil" along with Iraq and Iran. The September 2002 National Security Strategy focused on terrorism and announced the intent to use preemptive force when the United States perceives a potential terrorist threat. In early 2003, the United States acted on this strategy by invading Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein. Kim Jong Il may believe he is another target for regime change.

Second, North Korea could be using its nuclear program as a bargaining chip to gain desperately-needed economic aid. The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in a significant loss of economic aid, an economic catastrophe that was exacerbated by the famine and created a sense of desperation. Kim Jong Il's chances of staying in power would presumably be improved if the basic needs of his constituency are met.

Third is the possibility that Kim Jong Il's nuclear program is part of an aggressive military strategy. North Korea's primary goal has always been the reunification of Korea on its terms and this remains "the supreme national task." [24] The North's offensive military capability is designed to liberate South Korea from the occupation of United States imperialists and overthrow the "puppet" government in Seoul. [25] "Kim Jong Il's Military Strategy for Reunification" outlines a highly provocative and detailed reunification strategy based on manipulation, deceit, and aggression. [26] North Korea's perceptions are so clouded by their reunification obsession that it even apparently views the "sunshine policy" as South Korea's symbolic acknowledgement of Pyongyang's legitimacy. [27]

It is possible that all of the hypotheses play a role in North Korea's motivation to develop its nuclear program; however, the third hypothesis presents the most challenge. A strategy built around easing security fears or feeding the hungry is simple compared to challenging the deeply held nationalist beliefs of an isolated, well armed country. Kim Jong Il knows that South Korea's notion

of reunification poses as much of a threat to his regime as current United States policies. All of the resources necessary for his regime's survival are just below the 38 th parallel.

Know the enemy and know yourself.

Sun Tzu

What Does the United States Want?

The most obvious and immediate desire of the United States in the context of the North Korean nuclear crisis is to achieve a nuclear-free North Korea and eliminate the threat of Pyongyang proliferating WMD that could advance the goals of terrorists. In addition, the United States has longstanding concerns about the plight of the North Korean people under the totalitarian regime of Kim Jong Il. Goals specific to North Korea must be integrated within broader foreign policy goals, however.

United States foreign policy strategy in the Bush administration is based on the fundamental belief that an interdependent world comprised of states with democratic governments and market economies is inherently more peaceful and best serves our long term national interests for security and prosperity. [28] This grand vision outlined in the National Security Strategy seizes the opportunity provided by this "unipolar moment" to shape a world more favorable to freedom, stability, and the advancement of human rights. The post-Cold War world is both more dangerous and more unpredictable with threats arising from both state and non-state actors. Devising strategy requires a nuanced approach to regions and actors that achieves immediate objectives for stability and security, but also lays a foundation for longer-term stability goals. The strategist must examine the current situation in view of the historical context, cultural biases, and complex interactions between the players to devise a progressive series of steps that will most likely lead to the desired end.

In his book, The Grand Chessboard , Zbigniew Brzezinski offers a thorough analysis of these contextual factors and outlines regional goals that will facilitate achieving the United States global vision. For Asian countries to move progressively closer to a vision of democratic governments, free market economies, and an environment that values basic human rights of freedom and liberty, the United States must remain involved. The strains that are becoming evident with longstanding allies and the evolving relationship with China must be closely monitored and cultivated with a

primary strategic goal of insuring the United States remains a player and has an anchor in the region. [29] To do this requires a carefully balanced relationship between the three primary players: the United States, China, and Japan. The long standing relationship with Japan must be maintained while simultaneously engaging China's development without engendering animosity or destructive competitiveness between them. Both countries have strong cultural beliefs in their own exceptionalism and see their destiny as one of importance and influence. Both self-perceptions can be supported, but each needs to achieve its desired status in different realms. One way to achieve this balance is to encourage the emergence of China as a regional economic and military power, with Japan maintaining its status as a global economic power and increasingly participating in global peacekeeping responsibilities. [30] China may have grander aspirations, but realistically will not be ready for a globally dominant position for several decades.

The pivotal player is China with its remarkable economic development and growing relationships with its neighbors. China poses a greater potential future threat than the dying North Korean regime, so it is critical for the United States to keep the fragile relationship with China on track. The North Korean nuclear crisis threatens the evolving relationship between the United States and China because it puts China in the awkward position of being the reluctant ally of the world's worst rogue state. With their shared history of communist ideology, the remnants of the protective alliance between China and North Korea put constraints on China's options to influence the situation. The United States should not expect China to use a heavy-handed approach to influence North Korea with threats or sanctions and it may be unwise to put China in the position of making a veto decision at the UN Security Council. [31] The United States should respect China's perceived limitations in order to continue progress toward long-term strategic regional

goals. The crisis can be seen as an opportunity to enhance China's regional status by encouraging China to continue leading the multilateral diplomatic negotiations.

China would like to insure North Korea's continued existence in order to avoid being overrun with North Korean refugees if the country fails economically, or having the United States on its doorstep if the South leads a successful reunification. [32] In the near to mid-term, North Korea serves as a necessary buffer. South Korea's increasing nationalism and desire for reunification conflicts with both China's and North Korea's goals. Reunifying Korea may be a long-term goal for Asia, but near-term reunification and removal of United States' troops from South Korea and Japan would not be in the best interest of any of the players. The United States military presence in the area needs to be managed in a way that will allow South Korea's ambitions to unfold at a pace acceptable to the other players in the region. China would "prefer a reconciled rather than a unified Korea in which the South could bankroll and otherwise facilitate the rejuvenation of the North without controlling the entire peninsula." [33]

Building a strong foundation for future stability in the Asian region requires a multilateral approach among players whose histories include lingering animosities and mistrust. The six-party approach can be seen as a litmus test for building effective regional cooperation. [34] The United States' goals for Asia can in part be shaped by the process that has been adopted to deal with the North Korean nuclear crisis.

He who knows the art of the direct and the indirect approach will be victorious.

Sun Tzu

What Is The Current Strategy For North Korea?

Since the end of the Korean War, the United States strategy has been one of deterring the spread of communism by containing North Korea within its boundaries with a strong United States military presence in South Korea and throughout the region. Economic sanctions provided an extra bargaining chip that combined with deterrence were an effective strategy in meeting the United States strategy goals. [35]

When North Korea's nuclear ambitions became apparent in the early 1990s, the United States reportedly removed its tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea to eliminate any justification for North Korea's program, but left a significant conventional force to continue to contain the North through deterrence. Eventually, the United States and North Korea developed the 1994 Agreed Framework which began a policy of conditional engagement.

Blame for the failure of the 1994 Agreed Framework can be placed on both sides. The light water reactor plants due for completion last year were not expected to be operational until at least 2006. North Korea hindered progress with petty bickering and the United States stalled, while Japan and South Korea shouldered the financial burden. [36] The United States never provided promised formal written security assurances to the North. [37]

The October 2002 announcement that North Korea was pursuing their nuclear program came as an unwelcome distraction as the United States prepared for the impending war with Iraq. The administration's strategy toward North Korea has been characterized by shallowness that seemed to signal a desire to avoid dealing with the issue. The United

States stated it would not be

blackmailed, would not reward the North's misbehavior, would not negotiate until the nuclear program was verifiably halted, and transferred responsibility to the countries that have the most at stake. [38] North Korea's neighbors conveyed their disapproval of the nuclear program to no avail. At the six-party talks in August, the United States continued to place responsibility on the international community hoping North Korea would respond to collective pressure. North Korea maintains that the issue is with the United States and would prefer to deal directly with the United States. [39]

Reports on the second round of six-party talks in February hint that some progress was made although no settlement was reached. The United States achieved success with its multilateral strategy when five nations reportedly agreed that "nuclear weapons have no place on the Korean Peninsula and they must go." [40] The United States continues to insist that there will be no concessions without a "comprehensive dismantling of the North's nuclear program" and that the program must be abolished and not just frozen as has been suggested by Pyongyang. [41] North Korea indicated its readiness to give up its weapons program when the United States gives up its "hostile policy" toward North Korea. The United States denies hostile intent and offers a multilateral, rather than bilateral, assurance of security as part of an agreement to dismantle the nuclear program. So far, no deal.

And therefore those skilled in war bring the enemy to the field of battle and are not brought there by him.

Sun Tzu

What Are the Risks And Options?

The means with which the United States pursues policy options for North Korea have some limitations and risks. A precision strike to eliminate North Korea's nuclear development facilities is a tempting idea for a culture that likes quick solutions, lacks confidence in multilateral diplomatic efforts, and is increasingly annoyed with North Korea's posturing. But the risk is too high that war would erupt on the Korean peninsula and then escalate. Forced regime change would be too extreme, unacceptable to China, and create a nation building task the United States cannot afford while engaged in the Middle East. Economic sanctions may not work because North Korea is accustomed to extreme hardship and may not respond. Both China and South Korea would likely provide aid that would counterbalance any sanctions the United States applied in order to avoid unacceptable refugee problems.

What North Korea seems to want is another engagement strategy that would generate economic assistance and security assurances while allowing them to make vague gestures toward compliance

on the nuclear weapons issues and keeping a nuclear “ace” for future blackmail. The1994 Agreed Framework was successful in averting what appeared to be an imminent start of hostilities, but ten-years later we are in virtually the same situation. Many seemed to believe the regime would not last this long, but now it appears capable of hanging on with minimal support indefinitely. Another engagement package appeals to North Korea’s neighbors who are loath to deal too harshly with North Korea, but the risk is that we support the survival of a bad regime and a bad actor.

Kim Jong Il’s desire for aid has been thwarted by the Bush administration’s strategy of demanding full disarmament prior to negotiating an aid package. This is not the reaction Kim Jong Il was looking for and it does not conform to his apparent belief that he can manipulate the world. President Bush has not given him the upper hand he expected to have. Nevertheless, there are risks to a tougher approach. It is still unlikely Kim Jong Il will completely disarm regardless of the aid package dangled in front of him. This strategy further alienates him from the world and pushes him into a corner that may trigger undesirable consequences. The Bush strategy may have actually helped create a more favorable negotiating climate by neutralizing Kim Jong Il’s leverage, but the question is how long to wait before a meaningful move is made. The present situation still presents a stalemate that gives Kim Jong Il time to continue developing weapons and potentially develop links with terrorist networks.

There are no easy solutions. What seems clear is that an engaged North Korea is a more secure option than an estranged and isolated North Korea. Obtaining an agreement from North Korea to freeze and begin dismantling its nuclear program gives the international community more leverage over future behavior and would reinstate an active International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection process. Even if there is an unspoken acknowledgement that no agreement will be completely honored, engaging with North Korea should serve to delay and contain the expansion of its nuclear program. If conditional engagement is only a method to keep our foot in the door, an integrated campaign strategy with short and long range goals accompanied by direct and indirect activities is needed. With an overt conditional engagement strategy in place, indirect efforts should focus on hastening regime change.

To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.

Sun Tzu

United States Strategy Goals For North Korea

The first and most immediate goal is to prevent North Korea from using either nuclear or conventional weapons. The North has military power sufficient to invade South Korea and target Japan with ballistic missiles. North Korea's history of belligerent rhetoric suggests this is unlikely, but the threat must be taken seriously given its nationalistic desires combined with severe economic hardships which could result in a willingness to act out of desperation. It is possible Kim Jong Il believes time is running out.

A second goal is to insure that North Korea does not proliferate WMD to either state or non-state actors. There are reports of links between North Korea and Pakistan, Iran and Iraq related to sharing nuclear technologies. North Korea may continue to use its reported nuclear capability as a tool of negotiation, but in the hands of terrorists the threat becomes more unpredictable.

Third, use subtle methods aimed at facilitating a regime change in North Korea. The momentum of globalization is transforming many Asian economies and governments; were it not for the obstacle presented by Kim Jong Il's closed regime, it seems likely North Korea would be swept along in the trend toward free market economies and democratic reform.

In the process of negotiating a conditional engagement plan with North Korea, strategic regional goals must be kept in mind. For this reason, the fourth priority is to facilitate the evolution of a positive relationship with China and maintain alliances with South Korea and Japan along with the United States military presence.

Finally, the United States should use this challenge to enhance credibility and legitimacy as the world's leader. In the prosecution of the war in Iraq, the administration created the perception of an imperialist bully wielding power unilaterally to pursue self-interests, rather than the goal of creating a better world. [42] The United States' behavior must be scrupulously ethical and honest so any manipulation or deceit on the part of North Korea is clearly to their disadvantage. The United States must be willing to share power with multinational partners, keep promises, and show respect for others.

To a surrounded enemy you must leave a way to escape.

Sun Tzu

The Ways To Achieve Strategic Ends

An integrated approach requires simultaneous actions on several levels. The most visible feature of this approach is negotiating another engagement strategy, but other actions described below should also be pursued in order to establish security, shape the future environment, and sustain influence.

Never Let Your Guard Down.

Kim Jong Il's formidable military capabilities and stated desire for reunification on his terms must continue to be deterred through a strong military presence and credible threat from United States and South Korean forces. The deterrence strategy has worked and can be expected to continue to work. Even with the readjustment of United States and South Korean troop missions and positions, North Korea must continue to be convinced that we will maintain constant vigilance and respond with quick and decisive force to any aggressive actions on his part.

Making Engagement Pay.

Another engagement strategy is the most realistic approach, most acceptable to North Korea's neighbors, and portrays a judicious use of power and influence on the part of the United States. The actions to carry out this engagement strategy are best continued through the six-party talks in an open forum. Going into these negotiations, it is important to remember that Kim Jong Il does not want to reform, but seems to be willing to offer himself for sale for the right price. In this kabuki dance of negotiation, it will remain to be seen who can more cleverly manipulate the other. The intent is to be the superior manipulator so the price paid achieves the desired endstate. Realistically, near term success may only buy time by freezing nuclear activity, adding international inspections, developing a level of transparency, and providing leverage against future actions such as WMD proliferation.

The primary concession to North Korea's demands on the United States is to set up bilateral talks as a prelude to continued multilateral six-party talks. Part of North Korea's behavior is attention seeking and the attention it craves is from the United States. North Korea will not be satisfied with lower level diplomats negotiating in a multilateral setting without first being assured the United States takes them seriously. The individual selected to meet directly with Kim Jong Il must be of sufficient stature and credibility to satisfy his need for high level attention without directly engaging administration officials at this stage. One possibility is to ask former President Bush to serve as elder statesman; much like Carter did in 1994. The oriental tradition of respect for elders and the

dynastic parallel between the elder Bush and Kim Jong Il's father may provide a potent combination for success. In these discussions, the United States should agree to provide a conditional security assurance to North Korea in exchange for an immediate verifiable freeze on the nuclear program and continuation of multilateral negotiations.

The next multilateral talks need to build on the consensus achieved at the last round of meetings so that Seoul, Beijing, Tokyo, and Moscow present a consistent strategy for the future of North Korea. Key to this strategy is the exchange of minimal aid for verifiable steps toward disarmament by North Korea. Without appearing to abandon our current hard line approach, the United States can play the "bad cop" while facilitating North Korea's neighbors ability to be "good cops." The United States must maintain an unwavering demand that North Korea verifiably eliminate its nuclear program without being the primary agent to deliver aid and support in order to avoid the interpretation that the United States has given in to blackmail. North Korea will attribute symbolic significance to negotiators' actions and so it will be most effective to have the Asian countries take the lead in designing and executing an aid program. The United States should contribute no more than a fair share of resources, but may need to indirectly facilitate the ability of the Asian neighbors to provide aid. The goal of the aid package should be to develop an industrial capacity so North Korea can give up its dependence on world welfare and weapons dealing. It will be necessary to continue to develop a source of energy to support industry either through KEDO or an alternative program.

Bringing Them Down While Propping Them Up.

Another engagement strategy will not break the cycle of nuclear threats by itself. Ultimately, it will require regime change to set North Korea on a path of democratic free market reforms that will release its people from oppression. A "soft landing" has been discussed for a number of years in anticipation of North Korea dissolving under the weight of its own ineptitude. Yet they survive. While a "soft landing" can still be considered a preferred alternative to implosion, some prodding may be necessary to speed the process. There are a number of soft power tactics that should be pursued.

Although the North Korean people have been cut off from the world for years, it is more and more difficult for Kim Jong Il to be the sole dominator of information and propaganda. In a globalizing world, information is permeating boundaries and "the days when governments could isolate their people from understanding what life was like beyond their borders or even beyond their village are over." [43] North Koreans reportedly prefer to listen to Voice of America and Radio Free Asia rather than South Korean radio stations

because the latter does not criticize

their government. [44] Information infiltration should be a focused effort of an overall campaign plan.

The United States and its allies should track and, where possible, seize North Korean funds. [45] Resources are closely concentrated in the ruling elite and a blow to their comfort and well-being could foster discontent with the current regime. Intelligence sources should track funds gained through international crime activities, weapons dealing, and drugs.

We should also make use of international organizations to keep pressure on North Korea by exposing their idiosyncratic behaviors and human rights violations on a regular basis. [46] Judgments from organizations such as the UN would be more legitimate and credible than from the United States. We should insist on letting international aid teams inspect the distribution of food and supplies in the same transparent manner as other aid recipients.

Another priority is to establish a better process to deal with North Korea's refugees rather than simply returning them to an uncertain fate in North Korea. [47] China and South Korea's reluctance to open their borders to a flood of refugees is understandable, and so a broader international strategy should be devised so these political refugees can be settled in accepting locations around the world. [48] When the trickle becomes a flood, the regime will weaken.

Positioning for the Long Term.

The strategy also requires simultaneous diplomatic engagement with South Korea, Japan and China. The United States-South Korean relationship is showing signs of strain that could jeopardize progress with North Korea. Immediate steps need to be taken to synchronize goals. The United States must continue to assure Japan's security from a North Korean threat by augmenting defense capabilities as needed. Diplomatic efforts with China should encourage Beijing's economic development but postpone focusing on contentious issues such as human rights and Taiwan.

One able to make the enemy come of his own accord does so by offering him some advantage.

Sun Tzu

Anticipating Consequences

An engagement strategy optimistically presumes North Korea is willing and able to reform, and yet history cautions us to undertake this approach only with clear, verifiable, and enforceable conditions. Kim Jong Il is still a despicable character who is guilty of human rights atrocities, proliferating weapons technologies, and taking advantage of the generosity of others without reciprocating. One of North Korea's most renowned defectors and the creator of the *Juche* ideology, Hwang Jang Yop credits the North Korean dictator with the utmost of skill in maintaining control and says outsiders are naïve to believe Kim Jong Il is ready to open his country: "A considerable number of people are being fooled, including the United States." [49]

Kim Jong Il may be savvy enough to detect an underlying plot to open his regime, but he is likely to accept a conditional engagement strategy accompanied by security assurances because it satisfies his primary concerns of regime survival. The gradual provision of aid must be linked to clearly articulated reciprocal actions that lead to dismantling the nuclear

program under the scrutiny of inspection teams. Multilateral pressure and clear expectations may not be

enough and Kim Jong Il may still prove to be the superior manipulator using aid to survive without fully complying with demands. Every opportunity should be pursued to break into the closed society with information and aid programs in an effort to use soft-power to hasten internal change.

More problematic, and something not directly addressed by this strategy, is the North's reunification ambition. A conditional engagement strategy may serve to limit its military leverage by managing the nuclear program, but it does not eliminate its nationalistic desire to bring South Korea under its control. From a cultural perspective, Koreans are not inclined to believe in a "win-win" philosophy. Instead, the only possible outcome in the ideological battle between the North's communist *Juche* ideology and the South's Western-oriented, free market, democracy is a zero-sum game with a winner and a loser. [50] One proposed solution is to make an effort to shift the North's perspective so it can envision the possibility that both sides could win. [51] Kim Jong Il knows his economy is failing and reportedly wants to make reforms, but is held back by his unwillingness to relinquish his ideological position. [52] He has already made some free-market reforms and if he could associate regime survival with making further reforms, as China has, there is a chance for gradual progress in recognizing a win-win solution.

The upcoming United States election may either hinder or help progress with North Korean negotiations. If the election motivates the administration to break the stalemate and it can arrange an agreement in another round of six-party talks before the election, this success could offset what appears to be political damage surrounding the rationale for invading Iraq and the difficulties being faced in the stabilization and reconstruction phase. A more likely scenario, and one more consistent with the administration's past approach, would be to continue to hold the line, refuse concessions, and leave the heavy lifting to the multilateral allies. The risk is that meaningful negotiations may be delayed until well after another administration is in place, if the

current team is not reelected.

The choice may not be the administration's to make because North Korea may not be willing to make concessions according to the administration's timeline. Multilateral negotiations may go on for an extended time given North Korea's style of bickering, belligerence, and grandstanding. If a freeze can be put on the nuclear program as further negotiations for an aid package continue and if the WMD proliferation risk is kept low during the negotiations, then the talks will have achieved some interim success. Keeping North Korea coming to the table and maintaining a cohesive alliance with the regional partners is in itself important. Ultimately, it is the parallel passage of time, North Korea's continued interactions with other countries, and eventual change in leadership that will facilitate the achievement of long term goals. The key is not to let North Korea disrupt our overall strategic regional goals for Asia. Patience is required.

Keep him under a strain and wear him down.

Sun Tzu

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II. Nautilus Invites Your Responses

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