


Policy Forum 04-52A: What to Expect on the Korean Peninsula from a Second Bush Administration

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What to Expect on the Korean Peninsula from a Second Bush Administration

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What to Expect on the Korean Peninsula from a Second Bush Administration

By Dr. Larry M. Wortzel

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I. Introduction

Dr. Larry M. Wortzel, vice president for foreign policy and defense studies at The Heritage Foundation, writes: "President Bush has made it clear on several occasions that he wants a peaceful, negotiated settlement on the Korean Peninsula and has no intention of initiating the use of force against North Korea."

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II. Essay by Dr. Larry M. Wortzel

"What to Expect on the Korean Peninsula from a Second Bush Administration"
by Dr. Larry M. Wortzel

The principled approach that President Bush has taken in foreign policy has been validated by the results of the election on November 2, 2004. President Bush won the election with more votes than other any president in American history, and his party, the Republicans, have gained seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate. In short, the majority of Americans have endorsed the direction of President Bush's foreign and domestic policies.

The President's policies with respect to the Korean Peninsula were set forth clearly during the first Presidential debate in Coral Gables, Florida, on September 30, 2004. President Bush said that he believes that North Korea and Kim Jong Il failed to honor the agreement it had signed with the Clinton Administration and with South Korea. He began a new round of multilateral dialogue with North Korea in his first administration and contrasted his multilateral approach to the bilateral approach taken by President Clinton between 1993 and 2000.

In the debate with Senator Kerry, President Bush emphasized the need to have five parties talking to North Korea: South Korea, Japan, Russia, China, and the United States. And he argued in the debate that it is important to have five voices talking to Kim Jong Il because if Kim decides again not to honor an agreement "he's not only doing injustice to America, he'd be doing injustice to China (and the other negotiating partners) as well." Finally, President Bush stated without equivocation that he thinks it is a mistake to open up a separate, bilateral dialogue between the United States and North Korea. Staying unified in a five-nation coalition is the most effective way to send a clear message to Kim Jong Il.

My view is that our allies in South Korea, and the negotiating partners in the Six-Party talks throughout Asia, can count on President Bush's firm resolve to follow the formula he outlined in the election campaign. As he has stated a number of times, President Bush will seek a peaceful, negotiated outcome to create a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. He will try to ensure that there is some means to verify that, this time, Kim Jong Il honors any agreement he makes. The "Bush Doctrine" calls for the use of pre-emptive force to prevent an imminent attack on the United States, but President Bush has made it clear on several occasions that he wants a peaceful, negotiated settlement on the Korean Peninsula and has no intention of initiating the use of force against North Korea. I think the world can take President Bush at his word on this point.

There are a few things that America's allies in South Korea should expect.

First, expect a long, slow process. I don't think that Kim Jong Il will rush immediately to the negotiating table for a new round of talks. Pyongyang will likely wait for President Bush's inaugural

address on January 20, 2005, for any hints on future policies that may come from that. After all, at the State of the Union Address on January 29, 2002, President Bush used the term "Axis of Evil" to refer to North Korea, Iran and Iraq. Kim will wait to see how North Korea is characterized, if at all, in the inaugural address.

Second, expect adjustments in the second Bush Administration's appointed officials. It will be some time before any changes or adjustments in the National Security Council staff and the foreign and security policy team are made. And after that, some officials will require confirmation by the Senate. Thus, there may be a set of working group talks with North Korea but a pause in full negotiations while the second "Bush team" is fully at work.

Third, expect a consistent approach. The patient, principled approach taken in the first Bush Administration will continue, a rush to the negotiating table will not replace it.

Finally, expect the multi-lateral talks to continue at a level below that of Secretary of State. Do not expect to see Secretary of State Colin Powell, or his successor, doing "the Macarena" in a stadium in North Korea with Kim Jong Il like Madeleine Albright.

Meanwhile, the Bush Administration will move forward with other initiatives in Asia. There will be a military force posture adjustment under the Global Defense Posture Review that devotes more ships and aircraft devoted to maintaining the peace and security of the Western Pacific. At the same time we can expect to see an improvement in mobility and command and control in the region along with a reduction in ground forces on the Korean Peninsula. This will not weaken our allied defensive posture in Korea.

President Bush will move forward with the deployment of a layered system of ballistic missile defenses designed to protect deployed American forces, our friends and allies, and the United States from attacks by, or threats from, hostile ballistic missiles. The United States will continue to work closely with our allies in Japan on the development and deployment of such defenses and will encourage the government in South Korea to protect its own people with ballistic missile defenses.

American security policy will continue to deal with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems. I expect the second Bush Administration to pursue the Proliferation Security Initiative with vigor and to address future military threats with a combination of diplomacy, deterrence, strategic defenses, arms control and non-proliferation initiatives and capable offensive forces. President Bush will pursue the global war on terror and work closely with America's allies.

III. Nautilus Invites Your Responses

The Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network invites your responses to this essay. Please send responses to: napsnet-reply@nautilus.org . Responses will be considered for redistribution to the network only if they include the author's name, affiliation, and explicit consent.

Produced by The Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development
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