Policy Forum 97-16: Challenges to Peace on the Korean Peninsula

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NAPSNet Forum #7 -- Challenges to Peace on the Korean Peninsula

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"Challenges to Peace on the Korean Peninsula"

#7 -- July 28, 1997

The is intended to provide expert analysis of contemporary peace and security issues in Northeast Asia, and an opportunity to participate in discussion of the analysis. The Forum is open to all participants of the Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network (NAPSNet) . As always, NAPSNet invites your responses to this report. Please see "NAPSNet Invites Your Responses," below, and send your responses to the NAPSNet Coordinator at: napsnet-reply@nautilus.org .

CHALLENGES TO PEACE ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Essay by Robert E. Bedeski

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CHALLENGES TO PEACE ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

I. Introduction

The following essay, "Arms Control Inspections, the Armistice Agreement, and New Challenges to Peace on the Korean Peninsula," is written by Robert E. Bedeski, professor of political science at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. Prof. Bedeski's essay examines the difficult relationship between the interests of the international community and those of Korean nationalists that underlie all efforts either to find short-run means to stave off violent conflicts on the Korean peninsula or to forge long-run solutions to the problems that give rise to the enduring tensions and rivalries. Prof. Bedeski offers a detailed assessment of many dimensions of the present situation, and concludes with a proposal for a four-step process to achieve a lasting peace on the Korean peninsula.

Prof. Bedeski's essay continues discussion of the prospects for peace on the Korean peninsula begun in previous NAPSNet Policy Forums . The views expressed and arguments made in the following essay are those of the author. NAPSNet presents the essay as received, except for minor editing. Following the essay, the section "NAPSNet Invites Your Responses" provides information on how you can respond and participate in the online forum.

II. Essay by Robert E. Bedeski

ARMS CONTROL INSPECTIONS, THE ARMISTICE AGREEMENT, AND NEW CHALLENGES TO PEACE ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

by Robert E. Bedeski

1 Introduction: The Problem

The Korean peninsula has been the vortex of politics and war for much of the 20th century. World War II ended with its division, and today the divided Korea continues to attract the attention of Pacific countries as North Korea remains the spoiler of stability in the region. Isolated by ideology and the collapse of world communism, North Korea presents a new problem to the post-Cold War international order, with its determination to develop nuclear weapons, and to maintain a large standing army threatening South Korea. It is further hobbled by a malnourished population in a declining economy. Deserted by allies and isolated by the economic success of her neighbors, North Korea is ruled by basically the same regime since before the Korean war - under the son of the former ruler.

North Korea poses several problems to the international community:

1. Its determination to follow its own path to development ('Juche') renders the society nearly impervious to foreign advice and assistance. The array of institutions and processes which have been available to most other developing countries has been largely rejected by Pyongyang.

2. The North Korean nuclear program poses a military threat to Japan and South Korea, and could spark an arms race in which Japan abandons its current restrictions on armaments. The development of North Korean medium range missiles is seen as a growing threat in the region.

3. Collapse of North Korea as a political and economic entity would have far-reaching effects on South Korea, which would be flooded with economic refugees. The result would undoubtedly be a lengthy pause in South Korean economic development.

4. With one of the largest standing armies in the region under unpredictable leadership, North Korea cannot be underestimated in its ability to initiate conflict - even in a paroxysm of collapse.

During the past three years, and especially since the death of Kim Il Sung in July 1994, the UN and its members have tried to deal with the North Korean problem by a combination of aid, threats, and compromise. North Korea's isolation has been exacerbated by natural disasters and poor economic management, which perhaps reduced the motivation and ability of her leaders to launch any new conflicts. There remains the suspicion that food and economic aid have been channeled to the military, even at the expense of the suffering civilian population.

The short-run priority of preventing military conflict in the region has been met, but a permanent solution remains unattained. The dilemma of the Korean peninsula is that survival of a viable state in the north appears to be the minimum requirement of keeping peace and stability because 1) its collapse will set off new unknown crises, but 2) a divided peninsula remains intolerable to most Koreans. The goal of reunification will require a tremendous leap of faith that the process of integration will proceed smoothly.

Historically, the Korean peninsula has been divided for periods almost as long as it was united, and today international diplomacy is willing to accept the present division if reunification cannot be accomplished peacefully. Peace has a higher value to the international community than Korean nationalist aspirations to unity, and it is this premise which underlies all non-Korean peace efforts thus far. This study analyzes the present dilemma, and attempts to bridge, on the one hand, the present short-term solutions to avoiding conflict, and, on the other hand, the future need for reunification - which can be the only true solution to peace in the region. It is the view of the author that solutions must begin by returning to an understanding of the origins of the problem, and in revisiting them, an alternative approach can be developed. The current arrangements of KEDO and

the four-power discussion proposals, perhaps leading to a US-DPRK peace treaty, are useful and pragmatic, but do little to alleviate the core source of tension - peninsular division.

2. Background of the Problem: Armistice and Geneva Talks

With the end of the Korean war in 1953, a stalemate between the opposing forces was established under the Military Armistice Agreement (MAA). The People's Republic of China (PRC) and North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK) faced South Korea (the Republic of Korea, or ROK)1, and its major ally, the US, along with the United Nations. To enforce the Armistice Agreement, the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) was established, and detailed arrangements were made for mutual arms inspections and mobile investigating teams. The mission of this arrangement was to prevent a post-armistice arms buildup by the introduction of additional personnel and weapons onto the peninsula - it did not carry out arms reduction or disarmament. Soon after the truce, however, it became evident that the North Koreans and their allies were unwilling to allow the NNSC to carry out its limited mandate. The two Communist member nations of the Commission (Poland and Czechoslovakia) proved to be anything but neutral. Continued arms buildup in the Communist North and sabotage of the NNSC mandate of arms inspection frustrated the UN. Probably fearing that a strategic swing of the balance of forces in favor of Pyongyang might induce Kim Il Sung to launch another war of reunification, the US may have introduced nuclear weapons into its peninsular arsenal (a move which official policy will neither confirm nor deny). Undoubtedly the resulting deterrence preserved the stalemate, but could not bring about a permanent peace settlement. From 1953 until the early 1990s, the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) and NNSC functioned as the only direct points of communication between the major participants in the Korean war. An uneasy peace prevailed, with occasional probes by the North to test the will and ability of South Korea - especially during periods of political instability.

Part of today's regional problem originates in the failed attempt to reach a political settlement in 1954. At the time, peace talks were held in Genva to follow up the MAA, which had stipulated talks within three months after the Armistice to discuss withdrawal of all foreign troops from the Korean peninsula, to produce a peaceful method to resolve the Korean division issue and to conclude a proper treaty to replace the MAA. Present at the discussions were North Korea, the Soviet Union, China and the sixteen member-states of the UN who had sent troops in the Korean war (minus South Africa), plus the ROK.2 Britain, South Korea, the Soviet Union, and North Korea presented various proposals, but the two opposing sides failed to reach agreement on the key issues: 1) the authority and competence of the UN; 2) the principle of free elections; and 3) the withdrawal of foreign troops. On June 15, after two months of debate, the sixteen UN member nations issued a "Declaration on Korea", acknowledging the failure of the conference.

The differences proved insurmountable, and there was no elections, no reunification or nor a peace treaty. The refusal of South Korean President Syngman Rhee to sign the armistice had also placed his country in an awkward position - excluded from direct contacts with North Korea, and dependent on the US for defense and running diplomatic interference in the MAC, the UN and other international bodies.

By default, the MAA has remained the only peace instrument on the peninsula. In 1991, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and defection of most North Korean allies to normalization with South Korea indicated a wide swing in the balance of power which had persisted through the Cold War, and so some re-adjustments became necessary. During the critical period of 1988-1992, when North Korea saw the collapse of its supportive international system of communism, and saw the US unleash its new generation of weapons on Iraq, the sense of insecurity must have been enormous. Out of

pragmatism, North Korea concluded an agreement with the South in December 1991 which stipulated that both sides abided by the Armistice Agreement and would work to replace it with a peace treaty. Nevertheless, few of the provisions of the 1991 agreement were carried out, and it was followed by the inter-Korean basic accord ("Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation (Basic Agreement) and the Joint Declaration of De-nuclearization of the Korean peninsula") in February 1992. This included a pledge to transform the state of armistice into a peace treaty, and to abide by the MAA until a state of peace was realized.

However, the two sides were unable to resolve their differences on the scope of the inspections, and efforts to establish an inspection regime have been deadlocked. According to the United Nations report on verification,

The Basic Agreement is important in a military sense because it contains non-aggression clauses. Specifically, both sides agreed to set up a Joint Military Commission and to discuss steps to build military confidence and to achieve arms reduction, including the mutual notification of major movements of military units, and military exercises, the peaceful utilization of the demilitarized zone (DMZ), exchanges of military personnel and information, and phased reductions in armaments. Although the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea established the Joint Military Commission in May 1992 and tentatively adopted an auxiliary agreement for the detailed formula for South-North non-aggression, further progress has not been achieved owing to the aggravated political environment. 3

South Korea remains suspicious of North Korean efforts to negotiate a peace treaty with the US, fearing that the hidden purpose is to induce the US to withdraw its forces from Korea. Seoul also doubts US long-term resolve, was concerned that North Korea might link the peace treaty with settlement of the nuclear issue, and feared that American anxieties over the latter could lead to acceptance of the former, or at least complicate political and military conditions in resolving the nuclear issue.

The position of the South Korean government has been that there is no need for a US-North Korea peace treaty. Moreover, as Dr. Nam Man-Kwon writes, "The reason why North Korea forced the US to join DPRK-US military talks is because it believed that it drives in a wedge between the ROK-US's alliance system and blocks the US military assistance to South Korea in the event of military conflicts."4 From this, it is evident that a peace agreement between North Korea and the United States cannot be substituted for a broader treaty designed to secure comprehensive peace on the Korean Peninsula. A limited US-North Korea peace agreement designed to end the state of war between them cannot serve as a treaty which will secure peace and security on the Korean Peninsula by institutionalizing peaceful coexistence. exchanges, and cooperation between North and South. To achieve such a broader arrangement, one place to start is with the establishment of a cooperative peace regime, involving arms control and verification.

3. Recent Developments

With the collapse of North Korea's major ally and patron, the USSR, and the defection of practically all other Communist allies (even China 'betrayed' Kim Il Sung by establishing diplomatic relations with South Korea), it feared strategic vulnerability which was compounded by a declining economy. Under these circumstances, Pyongyang embarked on a program to develop her own nuclear capability, largely using Russian technology.5 Ironically, signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty also gave North Korea access to information and assistance on nuclear technology from the IAEA. By 1993 it was apparent that North Korea had either succeeded in developing a nuclear device, or was

approaching success. The international community recently had seen an outlaw nation (Iraq) come close to developing nuclear capability, and so any signs of clandestine activity were monitored to prevent a recurrence. US national technical means (high resolution satellite surveillance) had detected potential evidence of weapons development near the Yongbyon facility and shared this with the IAEA, which in turn found discrepancies in the regular inspections, and then demanded further inspections. This prompted North Korea to proclaim its intention to withdraw from the NPT regime - a precedent which would have severely weakened the delicate international agreement. The crisis was averted when former US President Jimmy Carter went to Pyongyang, and convinced Kim Il Sung to compromise and stay in the NPT - at the price of financing modern nuclear capability using light water generators.

The Geneva Agreement which followed provided for more IAEA inspections regarding the re-provision of these reactors, and also international assistance for North Korea to build nuclear generators. Under the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO)6, the financing and contracting of the project has faced a number of obstacles - especially North Korean objections to South Korean participation in the scheme. But Pyongyang has seen its negotiating position deteriorate, and its bargaining strategy is to extract as many concessions as possible to insure survival. Bad harvests due to floods and poor weather have further opened North Korea to international involvement despite a rigid ideology which demands self-reliance above all. Pyongyang has objected to and interfered with food shipments from the South, in spite of her population approaching starvation.

The immediate problem facing the United Nations, the US, and South Korea today is to prevent either sudden collapse or desperate aggression of North Korea by providing exit from some of its troubles, and a soft landing in a process similar to disarming a complex bomb. The mid-range challenge is to establish a peace settlement which will normalize relations in the region, and bring North Korea into the mainstream of international development. The long-range challenge is the reunification of the Korean peninsula - although the latter two challenges may be mutually contradictory.

4. The Structure of North and South Korea Relations: The Military Armistice Agreement

The starting point for a peace settlement on the Korean peninsula must be the Military Armistice Agreement. It has defined practically all formal relationships involving the two Koreas, and has served its limited purpose better than anticipated when it was negotiated at Panmunjom over four decades ago. All sides recognize that it must be replaced, but it will be exceedingly dangerous to abrogate it without something to put in its place.

A. The dilemma of negotiations on the Korean peninsula

Beyond the practical question of dealing with North Korea is the quasi-legitimate status of the two regimes. The basic unresolved dilemma is that neither regime regards the other as a sovereign state - and without the presence and commitment of multilateral actors, war would likely break out again to end the stalemate one way or another. It is a situation not unlike the ongoing question of the former Yugoslavia. In fact, the Korean War and the MAA probably established the first post-World War II settlement which has now become the precedent for a number of subsequent civil wars. As an experiment in civil conflict resolution, the armistice was successful in stopping a bloody war, but unsuccessful in mending a broken society.

One approach to understanding the Korean dilemma is to conceptualize the MAA as a quasi-constitutional core of a hypothetical state. In fact, a long-standing North Korean proposal for reunification was to create a Koryo confederation under a single government. For conceptual purposes, let us refer to a united Korea as "Koryo" - a name which applied to the first united Korean kingdom (918-1392 AD). From this perspective, the MAA and its associated institutions have been a rudimentary military government operating under the basic rules of the military truce. The process of reunification is therefore not the invention of a new nation-state, but a shift of powers from sub-national units behaving as sovereign states to a unified peninsular regime exercising full sovereign powers.

Some scholars argue that the major obstacles to a unified Koryo are international, not domestic, and that Koreans would solve their quarrels if left to themselves. However, if Kim Il Sung had reunified Korea with military force in 1950, without interference from the UN, the US, and other countries, the dynamic experience of South Korea in economic development and democracy would not have occurred, and US security assurances to Japan would have had far less credibility, with unknown consequences for politics in the region. In any event, the UN and its member countries have a significant stake in the peace and prosperity of Korea, and will play a role in any disposition of problems there.

The major role of the US as guarantor of the MAA and security of South Korea profoundly affects her relationship with North Korea. More broadly, there are not - and cannot be - any purely bilateral relations on the Korean peninsula which can be pursued without reference to third and fourth countries - modern Korea has been multilateralized despite its wishes to the contrary. A modern unified Koryo can come about only with the withdrawal of US forces from the peninsula, but at the same time, rapid departure would alter the balance of power and possibly precipitate the resumption of civil war - a risk too high to take. One North Korean proposal is that the US unilaterally make peace and reduce or eliminate its antagonistic position, and presumably this would make the MAA unnecessary.

B. The continuation of tensions under the MAA

North Korea has let it be known, as much through action as through declaration, that it no longer regards the MAA as valid. With the refusal of North Korea to allow any NNSC vestiges on its side of the DMZ, and her withdrawal from the Military Armistice Commission, supported by Beijing, the structure of the MAA has become unraveled.

A further problem of the MAA is that South Korea has not been a direct party, because, unlike North Korea, South Korea did not sign it. The South Korean position is that whether or not they are party to the MAA has no direct bearing on the question of whether they are competent to be the party to an arrangement for securing peace on the Korean Peninsula. The MAA status of South Korea remains problematic in a strict legal sense, but no practical solution is possible without its inclusion. International law provides that a treaty is binding only to the parties concerned, and it cannot create specific rights and duties for a third party without its express consent. Therefore, from a North Korean perspective, South Korea is not bound by the armistice agreement. Strictly speaking, this would mean that an armistice, not binding to the other belligerent party, is in force. Such an armistice, flawed in principle, has no legal force on South Korea, according to Seoul. The argument that the ROK is not the party to the 1953 MAA suggests the paradox that it is "an armistice agreement without an armistice", since it omits one major party.

The belief that the ROK is a party to the Korean Armistice Agreement even though it did not sign it, stems from the peculiarities of that agreement. An Armistice Agreement was a wartime accord of military nature, concluded for the purpose of halting hostilities. Accordingly, unlike an ordinary

peacetime treaty, it is signed by the military commanders of the belligerent parties, not by the officials of the signatories with the competent authority to sign treaties. In the case of the Korean Armistice Agreement, it was signed by the commanding general of the UN Command [UNC] (which included South Korean forces under its command) representing the United Nations on the one side and the commanders of the Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteers on the other. The Armistice Agreement and a hypothetical peace treaty are two very different instruments.

South Korea takes a pragmatic approach in dealing with North Korea. The government, for example, greeted the US-North Korea framework agreement signed in Geneva in October 1994 as an important basis for solution of the North Korean nuclear issue. Under the agreement, North Korea accepted the special inspections which it had earlier rejected. The North Koreans are undoubtedly equally pragmatic - but far more desperate - as their very survival is brought into question. In this sense, the situation is the reverse of 1953, when the government of Syngman Rhee feared that its allies would abandon it and trade the South Korean government for a pacified and reunified Korea.

C. North Korea's Priorities

What does North Korea want? Since its beginning in the post-World War II period, the Pyongyang regime's priority has been reunification under its leadership. All other considerations have been subordinated to this goal, which was thwarted by the stalemate of the Korean war. After decades of rebuilding its war-torn economy, following Stalinist methods, Kim Il Sung saw South Korea rebuild at an even faster rate, and outpace Communist systems on every front. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and Communism, and normalization between South Korea and practically all Communist or successor states - including Russia and China - Kim Il Sung's dream of a single Korean state diminished even further. Today, North Korea is ruled by his son, Kim Jong Il, who has little of his father's charisma and as yet undetermined power.7 The economy is shrinking, and only a large standing army, a possible nuclear capability, and a reputation for extreme unpredictability seem to be the major factors standing between survival and absorption by South Korea.

The nuclear program of Kim Il Sung provided an aid to the survival of the regime's existence - a threat to Pyongyang from any quarter could be countered by the unknown quantity of North Korea's capability and intentions. With the Geneva Framework Agreement of 1994, the North Koreans may have exchanged the valuable (and un-validated) "ticket" of nuclear secrecy for the rebuilding and modernization of its nuclear power structure - thereby neutralizing the severe energy shortage caused by the end of Russian and Chinese provision of oil at "friendship prices." Moreover, the exercise of bluff and confrontation undertaken by the desperate North Koreans proved highly profitable - they have little to lose and much to gain, and so can obtain maximum benefit by dragging out a hard-line approach as long as possible and as stubbornly as possible. In addition, they can still play the nuclear card because of the uncertainty of whether they have actually produced nuclear weapons.

From this perspective, the present stalemate is not without certain benefits to all sides. It allows some bargaining leverage to North Korea. From the UN side, there is no need to rush to meet North Korean demands for a peace treaty, since other forms of dialogue to engage Pyongyang have come into existence since 1990. Moreover, the MAC and NNSC had become marginalized by earlier events that their lapse has had little effect on peace and stability - except to beg the question of what will replace them. This is not a trivial matter, since the inevitable next crisis (whatever it may be) will raise the issue of military forces and their ongoing status.

North Korea is trying to break out of its international isolation, resolve economic problems, and consolidate Kim Jong Il's power. Improving diplomatic relations with the US has been one of the most important tasks for North Korea in 1996. Recognizing that the road to Washington may pass

through Tokyo, North Korea has held at least eight rounds of negotiation with Japan over normalization, but the nuclear issue and the controversy over Japanese reparations have prevented progress. While approaching dire circumstances, North Korea is not likely to transform itself into a good international citizen overnight.

Nevertheless, the negotiations between KEDO and North Korea over light-water nuclear reactors were finally concluded with concessions from both sides. The negotiations have demonstrated that North Korea will be a tough bargainer, but nevertheless is willing to compromise on some issues. Carrying out the terms of the agreement is another matter, and trust without enforcement of the agreement will not lead to fulfillment. It remains to be seen whether North Korea will live up to its obligations, but the most likely prospect is for grudging cooperation during the current time of troubles for North Korea - a combination of defection by allies, a new succession to power, mass malnutrition approaching starvation, pressures from all sides to reform, and declining economic health of the country.

5. Restructuring and Replacing the MAA

North Korean actions in crippling the Armistice highlight major flaws of the MAA and its institutions, which played an important role in keeping the peace, but also represented the bipolar world of the Cold War. The operative word throughout the Agreement's lifetime has been "Military " and as such, excluded non-military channels from its scope. Now that the Soviet Union has collapsed, and China has normalized relations with South Korea, the particular conflicts of the Korean War and the Cold War are no longer in force - except for the fundamental antagonism between North and South Korea. Now, a new set of institutions must be erected to reflect new realities. These new realities are the following:

* In the 1960s and 1970s, North Korea was growing rapidly, and seemed to be validation of the socialist/heavy industry model of growth under rigid central planning with only lip service to democracy. Today, she is a wounded nation - seriously damaged by its own leadership and its dogmatic ideology, and is now under nominal guidance by the son of Kim Il Sung - Kim Jong Il. Its economy may be stagnant, but its military forces are still a considerable threat, and medium range missiles are under development which could pose a threat to Japan. North Korea is nearly isolated - partly by choice to keep out "corrupting foreign influences" and partly by refusal of the major industrial nations of the world to establish diplomatic or trading relations with it because of North Korean inability to pay its debts, and engage in the normal give and take of international trade.

* Once war-torn and swollen by refugees from the North, today South Korea has become a major trading nation and is one of the strongest economies in Asia. It is one of the most successful cases of political, economic, and social transformation in the Third World. South Korea is highly suspicious of North Korean moves to improve her international status, since this will encourage Pyongyang to continue its totalitarian bellicosity and military threats to Seoul. In addition, breathing new life into what appears to be a moribund regime will only postpone reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

* China, since 1979, has pursued "market Leninism", and has enjoyed a rapidly growing economy as the nation casts off her Communist constraints. Once a staunch ally of Pyongyang, China today sees many South Korean firms and individuals investing, and trade between the two countries has grown rapidly - much to the consternation of North Korea which sees an ominous trend in capitalist investment in socialist countries. China will always regard the Korean peninsula as a vital strategic region, and will not permit any other country to exercise hegemonic influence there if it can be prevented. Today, China has influence in both North and South Korea - which is probably more than

it might have in a united Korea. Russia - because of its disarray - has little of its former influence in North Korea, and is seen largely as a source of raw materials and as a consumer of cheaper products by South Koreans. It is no longer the major military underwriter of North Korea as in the past. From the Chinese perspective, the present balance of power - including the peninsular division - is a desirable situation in that no major power - including the US, Japan and Russia - exercises strategic primacy.

* The major sponsor of North Korea in the past, the Soviet Union, no longer exists, and the Russian successor state has demonstrated little enthusiasm to forego the benefits offered by developing good relations with Seoul. Russia remains an interested party in the Korean peninsula, but can no longer afford to be a player in the Cold War great strategic game. Nevertheless, the Russians have proposed an international conference to resolve the Korean issue - realizing that they will otherwise have no influence on the proposed four-power talks.

Additionally, several realities remain unchanged:

* The US remains committed to the defense of South Korea under the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty8, and this has entailed a closely coordinated security and foreign policy. North Korea sees the US as the major obstacle to breaking out of isolation, and would also welcome normalization with Japan, another major US ally in the region - but only with billions of dollars in Japanese reparations for the colonial period (1910-1945).

* While Japan was the only power to extend unified colonial power over all Korea in the 20th century, its security ambitions have been restrained by the US-Japan Security Treaty. Japan has major trade and other economic interests in South Korea, and hopes to extend into North Korea, if conditions allow. Japan sees North Korea as a potential military threat if arms development programs continue. At the same time, further economic ties must await a North Korean regime more amenable to foreign cooperation.

* Increasingly, Canada has been able to engage North and South Koreans in discussions of security questions in bilateral as well as multilateral fora. Trade and immigration are two topics of importance between Canada and South Korea, while a series of annual workshops on arms control and verification between the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and Korean Institute of Defense Analyses (KIDA) have established a dialogue on security matters. From this bilateral perspective, Canada has a growing national interest and stake in Korean peace and stability - in addition to the commitment of men during the Korean War. Influence can be amplified through our shared participation in numerous multilateral organizations, including the UN and various peacekeeping operations, and in providing leadership in reducing tensions in Korea.

6. Towards a Korean Peace Treaty

North Korea makes no secret that it wants a peace treaty with the US - one that excludes South Korea. This has been a goal in undermining the institutions of the MAA - to clear the way for bilateral relations by leaving few alternatives. Certainly US recognition of Vietnam has encouraged Pyongyang to hope that normalization with a former enemy was now a possibility. There is even limited cooperation with the US search for the remains of MIAs in North Korea.9 One major difference between Korea and Indochina, however, is that Vietnam is a unified country and can serve as a strategic buffer against China in Southeast Asia. In addition, there was no major US ally - such as South Korea - to object to normalization. Finally, Vietnam is, to use the vernacular, "open for business" - and investors have flocked to an impoverished economy where major opportunities for market and production expansion exist. None of these features is present in North Korea - or at least

not to the same degree as in Vietnam. If US and Chinese relations deteriorate over security, human rights, Taiwan, and trade, then a bilateral link with North Korea might become more attractive to Washington. But even so, South Korean objections cannot be overridden.

A. The MAA as interim agreement

The first priority in Northeast Asia is to settle the impasse on the Korean peninsula. As one of the earliest and most durable post-World War II peace settlements, the disposition of the MAA may also be a precedent for future settlements - whether in the Middle East or Balkans or elsewhere.

When South Korea and China normalized relations in August 1992, observers raised the question of replacing the MAA with a peace accord, since both countries were two of the main belligerents in the Korean war. North Korea had long argued for a peace treaty with US, but both Seoul and Washington rejected it, saying that any peace treaty should be signed by the two Koreas since they were the main parties which had fought the war. Technically, the MAA was strictly a military agreement among commanders in the field, and it left most legal questions unsettled. Moving to a full-fledged peace treaty requires that some of the legal and political implications be further explored.

China's position was that it had battled against the United Nations, not against the South Koreans, so a peace treaty was not deemed necessary at the time of normalization - unlike Sino-Japan normalization in 1972 which carried with it the burden of a formal treaty to end the state of war.10 The signatories to the MAA were the commanders of the armed forces of the PRC, North Korea, and the United Nations Command. South Korea under President Syngman Rhee refused to sign, claiming that the agreement would permanently divide the peninsula. The Armistice was a practical instrument signed in July 1953 to end the fighting, and was never intended to be a permanent settlement. Yet it has proven impossible to alter for over four decades because the environment of mutual hostility and distrust. Russia claims that the US and North Korea are technically not signatories to the Armistice Agreement because it was signed by their respective military commanders who were not acting in the capacity of national delegates.11 If this formulation was valid, then the government of North Korea could not negotiate a peace treaty to end the Korean War directly with the government of the United States, since war was never officially declared. The US position is that the Armistice Agreement remains valid, and that any international discussions on replacing it must include both North and South Korea. China, however, has supported North Korea and has indicated this by withdrawing from the Military Armistice Commission.

The most immediate task at present is ensure that war does not break out again. This can be accomplished by designing an interim agreement which accomplishes the following:

1. Establishes interfacing institutions which provide effective communication between the US and North Korea, and would include South Korea, either directly or indirectly. As in the Military Armistice Commission, South Korea would have its interests protected even as a junior (and silent) partner to the US-DPRK relationship.

2. Establishes a US presence in Pyongyang which could be the thin edge of a wedge for communication, democracy, and market opening. With the opening of US-DPRK normalization, a statement of principles could be the basis for future expansion of human rights and democracy.

3. A peace treaty with North Korea could enhance the peace and security of all Korea, stabilizing a situation which continues to have threats for all countries in the region. This stability can be expedited by inclusion of an arms control regime which caps and eventually reduces military capabilities and this will help remove anxieties over strategic capabilities and intentions. The NNSC

model is the necessary starting point for establishing such a regime, and if it is not resuscitated, then its successor should be clearly identified as such so that the MAA principles of arms control, on-site inspection, and monitoring be continued as the basis for any agreement.

The point of departure for an interim agreement could be building upon the MAA, rather than re-inventing a truce and hoping that new exigencies will create an improved design. To jettison the MAA without structures to take its place immediately, will remove the one proven international safeguard against renewed war on the peninsula. Despite its flaws, the MAA has been a deterrent for much of its history. The NNSC never worked properly - and was not given a chance to work - but it represents a will to control weapons, and could be further internationalized, and placed under the IAEA. Some redesigning is required - perhaps with wider membership.

A specific peace treaty might formally exclude South Korea, but this is not an insurmountable obstacle. Pyongyang and Seoul have concluded other agreements in the past, including non-aggression, that work towards better relations including reunification. By itself, a peace treaty, following an interim, or bridging, agreement, would not enshrine the permanence of the DPRK, since other factors will more directly affect the survival of the current regime. Normalization under a peace treaty would also provide other countries, including Canada, an opportunity to establish relations with North Korea.

B. Possibilities for a Peace Treaty

A peace treaty is a contractual instrument for ending a state of war between two or more countries. Essentially normal relations between former belligerents can exist, even in the absence of a peace treaty, although North Korea apparently wants a peace treaty and normalization simultaneously. The People's Republic of China (PRC) and Japan, for example, did not sign a treaty of peace (and friendship) until 1978, formally ending World War II hostilities. Russia and Japan have still not signed an accord to end the formal state of war between them due to the failure to resolve the question of the Northern Territories. In a practical sense, a peace treaty is not vital to normal diplomatic relations between countries which have fought each other in the past. Historically, different visions of one preferred settlement between two former belligerents may generate new conflicts - as Japan discovered in 1978 when China demanded insertion of a clause which the Soviet Union considered provocative.12

A peace treaty is the most common method of ending a state of warfare between states, but actual refraining from belligerent acts is a common substitute when written agreement is not feasible. A state of war can be ended by resumption of diplomatic relations or normalization.13 For example, South Korea and China ended an implicit state of war between them with the joint statement establishing their diplomatic relations. Paragraph Two of the declaration at the time of normalization stated that the two sides "agree to develop a lasting good-neighbor and friendly relationship," thus implying that the state of undeclared war between South Korea and China had terminated.

Moreover, the Korean War was not a declared war, and thus has remained a challenge to peacemakers seeking to reduce and remove threats in the area of Northeast Asia. The MAA ended the armed conflict, but not the hostilities, between the two Koreas and their respective allies. It was to be a temporary expedient, and now North Korea understandably wants a formal settlement which will reduce the military threats it perceives from the US-ROK alliance, and if possible, desires a diplomatic and economic lifeline to be thrown to it.

C. Preferred visions of a peace treaty

The problem of negotiating a peace treaty in Korea is the different visions of what the settlement

would involve. North Korea wants to normalize relations with the US - in a way that parallels the US normalization of relations with the PRC in 1979. At that time, Taiwan had been the major obstacle to Sino-American rapprochement, and normalization resulted in removal of the US Embassy from Taipei to Beijing. While no such radical shift is probable in Korea, North Korea is counting on American recognition to provide a boost to survival chances.

What is South Korea's preference in a peace treaty? Negatively, it does not want any major concessions to North Korea which will heighten military insecurity or restore the regime's long-term viability. Positively, Seoul desires an opening of North Korea, along with access to resources, markets, and labor. South Korea chaebol (industrial conglomerates) are already exploring economic and trade links with the north, and support government rapprochement. Although Seoul and Pyongyang signed a non-aggression pact in December 1991, subsequent actions by the North reduced the perceived validity of the agreement - notably the nuclear weapons and missile programs. A US-DPRK peace treaty would probably reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula, as long as North Korea remains vulnerable. South Korea fears that reduced tensions, without significant reorientation of the Pyongyang regime, would only be an opportunity to reconsolidate and prepare for a more belligerent posture.

US objectives in a peace treaty with North Korea include tension reduction, as well to end the necessity of deploying large numbers troops and equipment in the region. A peace treaty would not bring all US troops home, but would make their high alert status and frequent training maneuvers - including "Team Spirit" - a lower priority. Also, as Sino-American relations become more competitive and even antagonistic, a more normal relationship with North Korea is desirable, with possible leverage in military, trade and economic affairs in order to counter Chinese hegemony. Moreover, the continued presence of the US in Northeast Asia may be necessary to allow Japan the luxury of low defense expenditures and minimal defense posture. While many Americans regard this as a "free ride", a much larger number of Asians would regard a re-arming Japan as a significant threat, triggering a possible arms race in the Pacific. Thus, US-DPRK normalization could reassert the credibility of US commitment and flexibility in the region.

Japan has defined itself as a trading and manufacturing nation since defeat in 1945, and has relied on the US for its security umbrella though the occupation and during the period of the US-Japan security treaty. Japan has made major commercial inroads into South Korea, and hopes North Korea will become accessible. Tokyo therefore would welcome US-DPRK normalization which would no doubt pave the way for similar rapprochement - in the same way that President Nixon's visit to China in 1971 was followed by Sino-Japanese normalization in 1972. Japan also would prefer a less mistrustful North Korea which continues to build up and modernize arms stocks, while supporting subversive elements within Japan.

China has long suffered North Korea as a dubious ally, especially during the Sino-Soviet rift, when Kim Il Sung aligned with the USSR. North Korean nationalism, similar to that of Vietnam, has been defensive against Chinese hegemonism, and so Beijing would not be averse to US-DPRK rapprochement to the extent that it lowered what the Chinese sometimes see as paranoia. A peace treaty would be acceptable as long as there was implicit recognition of China's sphere of influence on the Korean peninsula - a geographical expression which has served as an avenue of invasions and migrations between Japan and China for centuries. Thus the international context of a proposed treaty is much more complex than the simple bilateral relations between the US and North Korea, and requires a broad diplomatic effort in multilateralism.

7. A Plan for Settling the Korean Issue

Based on the above considerations, and a survey of existing and possible initiatives, it is not presumptuous to suggest that a comprehensive settlement of the Korean issue can be made by pursuing the following approaches, and in the following sequence:

1. Re-establish the MAA as an interim agreement to maintain the present peace.

2. Carry out the KEDO initiatives as a means of weaning North Korea from its nuclear weapons program, and as a CBM.

3. Establish normal relations between the US and North Korea, with a peace treaty as necessary.

Other countries, including Canada, could then follow with normalization. This would begin a system of treaties which ties North Korea to a broad international community in return for provision of economic aid and technology transfer.

4. Convene Geneva II to resume the international framework for Korean reunification.

These stages are elaborated below:

Stage One: Restore the Military Armistice Agreement as a temporary and transitional security regime with a one-year time limit.

The MAC must be restored as the supervising organ for the MAA, with North Korea and China resuming their participation. It would set a termination date for the Armistice, and all parties would return to the status quo of 1990, or some mutually agreed situation when the main parts of the agreement were in place. In addition, the UN should establish an arms control and verification regime along the DMZ, using fences, sensors, and overhead monitoring. This would aid in minimizing a breakdown of the military stalemate which has prevailed. During this one year limit, North Korea and the US could negotiate their peace treaty and KEDO could continue its activities.

The breakdown of the MAA leaves Korean peace and security vulnerable until other arrangements

are made. Even the formal but somewhat toothless procedures of the past were better than fighting, in that the MAC and NNSC provided regular meetings and procedures for the handling of alleged violations. Despite occasional provocations and violations, the armistice has held the peace. In order to move beyond the armistice and provide a transitional regime while new political and diplomatic provisions are worked out, it is proposed that a peninsula-wide system of fences, sensors, video cameras be established along the DMZ on both North and South Korean sides, and until completion of reunification. This would maintain separation of forces, and provide a major incentive for reunification - when the rigorous separation was no longer needed. In addition, there should be an interim monitoring and verification force, modeled on the NNSC, with fixed and mobile units to investigate reports of violations. Unlike the old NNSC, the new verification force would be complemented by overhead surveillance and work for increasing transparency. A first task could be to expand the DMZ from its present four kilometer width to ten or twenty kilometers to serve as a buffer. This new zone could be monitored with various systems, including balloon mounted cameras, remote-controlled unmanned aircraft, regular surveillance flights by patrol aircraft, high-altitude monitoring, and satellite reconnaissance. This will enhance security of the two Koreas and avoid incidents which could escalate into serious conflict in the absence of armistice-specified institutions. These regimes should be introduced cooperatively with the North Koreans and Chinese as arms control and disarmament partners.

Local ground measures will be the best place to start, and aerial cooperative monitoring could be added later. The South Korean defense establishment will also be reluctant to share information with North Korea as long as the antagonisms remain, particularly if it opens up new opportunities for evasion of detection. A cooperative security regime would be a step forward in implementing the goals of the South Korean Foreign Ministry: "A lasting peace cannot be achieved on the Korean Peninsula simply (by) changing the state of war between the parties to a peacetime relationship. To establish a lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula, which has the highest concentration of two opposing forces deployed across the border, it is essential to have practical, effective, and diverse devices securing peace."14

Only when measures to defuse tension, build up trust, and reduce arms, along with verification measures, dispute settlement mechanisms, and safeguards are integrated into a treaty, can peace and security be brought to the Korean Peninsula. Maintaining a stable balance of power has been the fundamental condition of securing peace on the Korean peninsula, but the end of the Cold War has created an unstable and asymmetrical situation for which a new arrangement is necessary. At this juncture it is vital that UN, US, and ROK moves do not unnecessarily intimidate or antagonize North Korea, while at the same time avoid concessions which reward dangerous and belligerent behavior. One possibility is to involve North Korean diplomats, officials, experts and scholars in as many multilateral activities as possible, especially in the field of arms control and disarmament in order to demonstrate how their interests would be served by further participation.

Stage Two: Pursue four-way discussions, building on the experience of KEDO, the Military Armistice Agreement, and various North and South Korean agreements.

This way, the four powers (China, the US, North and South Korea) with the most immediate interests could work out further details for demilitarizing the DMZ and initiating North and South dialogue and cooperation. Diplomatic, cultural and sports exchanges could also be pursued. In order to further involve North Korea in an international settlement, KEDO should be used as the vehicle of

bringing in economic aid. The US, South Korea, and Japan should broaden KEDO to include not only energy technology to North Korea, but other forms of aid as well - requiring guarantees and verification safeguards that it would not be used for military purposes.

Stage Three: Normalize US-North Korea relations with a peace treaty.

So far, North Korea has taken the initiative to press for a specific peace treaty with the US While conclusion of a treaty might settle the immediate problem of US-North Korea relations, it will likely have minimal effect on a general solution to peace on the Korean peninsula. What is needed is not a peace treaty as proposed by North Korea, so much as a peace system, or peace regime, to resolve the continued confrontations on the peninsula. The US and South Korea have raised a counter proposal - a four-power negotiation among the US, China, and North and South Korea. This will help to resolve some of the more immediate issues arising from the unraveling of the MAA, and it will create a new peace system which reflects post-cold war realities. But this arrangement may actually induce a bipolar (China-US) condominium over the Korean peninsula. In this, the United Nations becomes a marginalized spectator15, and those nations which have interests, including Japan, Russia, and perhaps Canada, will also be sidelined. Moreover, such a condominium could become a hostage dependent upon Sino-American cooperation and broader good relations. The Clinton proposal of April 16 and the Korea-US Joint announcement made no mention of a UN role, and it is no doubt a proposal for what is possible, but it neglects the concept of a Korea beyond the present division. For example, it mentioned 'reconciliation' but not reunification. The proposal for four-way discussions may ultimately lead to a peace settlement, but it also potentially leads to establishment of two spheres of influence on the Korean peninsula - US security leadership in South Korea, and possible Chinese dominant influence over the North.

A US-DPRK peace treaty, with diplomatic normalization, will be an important step in bringing North Korea into a network of international connections and obligations, which should help to reduce tensions in the region. It is a process which can parallel the transformation of China, started in 1979 at the time of US normalization.. Three years after the death of Mao, the new leadership under Deng consolidated and launched economic and diplomatic reforms which have continued to the present. Although some of these reforms have benefited the Chinese military, the country is now a major player in international diplomacy, far more commensurate with her size and population than ever before. The passing of paramount leader Kim Il Sung in 1994 requires several years for consolidation of new leadership, and signs of cautious reform are beginning to appear. Extending a firm but cautious hand of friendship, aid, trade and investment will strengthen any proclivity to reform in Pyongyang, and ease the path to a more normal system. If the Chinese normalization/reform scenario is justified, then mutual reinforcement of external incentives and internal transformation of the North Korean regime is a strong possibility. In this context, a US-North Korea peace treaty can facilitate the following developments:

* A peace treaty will open lines of communication between the DPRK and the US with its allies - entailing aid, trade, and simple diplomatic intercourse. The greater engagement of the DPRK in normal relations may ameliorate some of its more egregious behavior.

* A peace treaty will restore diplomatic symmetry to the Korean peninsula, with Chinese and Russian normalization with South Korea, and US normal relations with North Korea. In this, Japan will probably follow closely after the US While this symmetry will legitimize the division of the Korean peninsula, it will also likely reduce emergent conflict.

* It will replace the problematic and limited MAA, and should create a new frontier apparatus to regulate the DMZ.

* A peace treaty will blunt some of South Korea's exclusive advantages in its relationship with the US, forcing Washington to include the Pyongyang factor in dealing with Seoul. A slightly more even-handed approach will result, with expected benefits to the process of reunification, since a great deal of domestic dissidence in South Korea has criticized (often with violence) the US as a major obstacle to reunification. Thus the treaty can become a catalyst for unity talks. Here again, the China experience may be relevant. With the uncoupling of the US from support of Taiwan, Taipei became more realistic in its pretensions as government of all of China. There has also been a significant reduction of tensions across the Taiwan Straits, as well as significant democratization since US-PRC normalization.

* A peace treaty could significantly reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula by reducing North Korean anxieties about its own demise - anxieties which no doubt have played a role in seeking nuclear weapons. Both North and South Korean governments will still have to worry about their respective fortunes under a reunification regime (Koryo), but the means of the evolving relationship will be diplomatic rather than military.

While the benefits of a US-DPRK treaty, accompanied by normalization, are several, there are also arguments against it:

* It will make the division of the Korean peninsula more difficult to terminate because it will harden the status quo. By early 1996, South Korea is stronger than it had ever been. Its economy is growing, unemployment is low, and Third World status is a thing of the past. Democratic government is firmly established, and Presidents of the past have been tried for corruption and treason in order to discourage any return to dictatorship in the future. North Korea, on the other hand remains in downward freefall, and can only be saved by international intervention. The Geneva agreement, KEDO, and a US-DPRK peace treaty are lifelines to be thrown to a moribund system. It ;may be as if NATO, the UN and the US stepped in to save East Germany during the year or two before its collapse, thereby preventing German reunification. A major difference is that Pyongyang appears far more determined to survive, recognizing that a German style "soft landing" is impossible - also, if South Korea is willing to prosecute its own ex-Presidents as traitors and criminals, how much mercy will be shown to the North Korean leadership, which has inflicted far more misery on the Korean people? Also, the border between East and West Germany was far more porous than that between North and South Korea - with radio, TV, mail, and travelers moving between. Even the notorious Berlin Wall could not stop the hemorrhage of East Germans.

* A peace treaty will do little to enhance the North and South Korea relationship which is central to peace, if South Korea is excluded. In fact, Seoul would regard US-DPRK relations as a betrayal because of the legitimacy which would be accorded a previously 'rogue' government. One could imagine an affronted ROK strengthening relations with Russia and China to express discontent, just as Taiwan sent feelers to North Korea following South Korean normalization with the PRC.

* It rewards Pyongyang for belligerent behavior - including confrontations on the DMZ, refusal to accept special inspections, and unilaterally withdrawing from the MAA. The North Koreans have seen that obstructionism works - while Jimmy Carter's trip to Pyongyang in 1993 to negotiate with Kim Il Sung over the nuclear issue was hailed as a major breakthrough for settlement, it also demonstrated that the West would blink first when confronted with local obstinacy. The Geneva agreement and KEDO are hugely expensive, and have probably given Pyongyang a new lease on life. A peace treaty would be seen as a reward for obduracy in breaking the MAA.

* If a peace treaty is to be pursued, then it should address and include elements of past agreements - rather than try to invent from a tabula rasa. Most importantly, US-DPRK normalization should not stop at that point, but must move on to solution of the unity question.

Stage Four: Restart the 1954 Geneva Conference as Geneva II.

The final stage of international supervision of the Korean question will be to recall the Geneva Conference as "Geneva II", or convene a new conference to resume consideration of the reunification question. The original Geneva Conference opened on April 26, 1954, and stalemated on whether the United Nations or the Koreans themselves should settle the questions of reunification, national elections, and the withdrawal of foreign troops. North Korea was supported by China and the Soviet Union at the time, but now the UN may be its only option.

The reconvened Conference would involve twenty representatives - the nineteen countries which fought in the Korean war, plus the United Nations itself. To avoid North Korea fears of isolation, a system of weighted voting and extraordinary veto would have to be designed. Geneva II could begin by revisiting the unsolved questions of 1954 as the point of departure. The goals of the conference would be a unified and neutral and independent and internationally guaranteed Korea. An outcome would be one in which a greater UN role is exercised over the region, with a Council resembling NATO's North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC)16 which could be adapted and designed to provide an infrastructure to finance, organize, and execute the necessary arms reduction, economic development, and steps towards reunification.

Summarizing some of the previous discussion, it is proposed that four key steps be taken to achieve stability and reunification. This framework would not preclude the major roles for the US and China already contained in the four-way discussions, but the Korean question is far too important to leave to four countries which have been belligerents in the past, and whose record of cooperation remains weak. The US and South Korea should make a counter proposal to a peace treaty - one which would include an arms control regime to incorporate the multi-national as well as new technologies which are mutually acceptable to all sides. This should be included into a proposal to reconvene the Geneva Conference on Korea.

North Korean proposals for a peace have reminded the world that the MAA is left-over from the Cold War, and should be replaced - nearly 42 years after the failed Geneva Conference. An international peace conference should be to include the original parties - China, North Korea, Russia, South Korea, the US, and the other United Nations states17 that fought in the Korean. Such a proposal would tend to move the issue of US-North Korea bilateral relations to a lower priority as well as shift the dialogue to a multilateral framework. It is conceivable that the US would initially oppose Geneva II since American bilateralism is at the core of the Clinton plan (US-China, and US-South Korea). Geneva I represented a multilateral process aborted by the Cold War and Indochina. Geneva II would be a multilateral effort to restore a greater international engagement in Korea. Canada, perhaps with support from Australia, must take the lead in convincing the four parties to broaden the discussions - both in scope and in membership.

Meanwhile, the Armistice Agreement must be re-established as the interface between military forces on the Korean peninsula. As possible first steps, the Military Armistice Commission should be revived - without participation of any South Korean officer - the formal grievance which caused the withdrawal of North Korea in 1991. At the same time, North Korea must agree to the re-

establishment of the NNSC or a reasonable substitute, and allow the presence of the original parties (with either Czech or Slovak delegates, decided in joint consultation with the MAC). The inclusion of the proposed arms control and verification regime would allow preservation of existing peace and stability while the parties worked out a full peace settlement.

The Armistice mechanism was rigid and temporary, and lacked effectiveness, but it has been a negative precedent to allow North Korea to win concessions by creating crisis - as was the case with Pyongyang's threat to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Once the Armistice Agreement machinery has been restored, all parties should agree to return to Geneva and resume the discussions on the Korean peninsula - discussions which were side-tracked by the Indochina conflict and the Cold War.

The agenda of "Geneva II" should include the following:

* A peace treaty to end all vestiges of the state of war between North and South Korea. This should explicitly incorporate various Inter-Korea agreements negotiated in past years. There should also be the withdrawal of all foreign troops, establishment of UN authority over guaranteeing all agreements, and setting up of machinery and timetables for all-Korea elections.

* Establishment of a process to develop a realistic timetable for reunification between North and South Korea, addressing various CBMs to build trust between the two sides. This has been attempted over the past several years on the basis of bilateral negotiations, but unless a multilateral approach - including pressure on both Koreas - is applied, the outlook seems to be continued impasse.

* Implementation of an ongoing system of arms control and verification measures to insure that neither side nor its allies intimidate the other, with the goal of reducing conventional and non-conventional weapons on both sides. A system of on-site inspections by neutral observers as well as bilateral observers, and an independent regime of aerial and satellite surveillance should be established to monitor weapons and personnel deployment. A suggested point of departure is the NNSC model, with its representatives from four neutral nations and the system of inspection teams, perhaps adding North and South Korean observers to the teams. The NNSC can be restored as an interim measure pending settlement of the new regime. Lessons from the IAEA inspections in Iraq should be applied to the DPRK case. UNSCOM techniques and solutions in Iraq have counterparts which could be operationalized in Korea as well. Much has been learned since the Armistice Agreement of 1953, and this should be part of the arms control and verification regimes to be set up.

Benefits of Geneva II

Northeast Asia today faces an entirely different constellation of power from the situation in 1954. The Soviet-American bipolar world no longer exists, although weapons of mass destruction still threaten peace and stability. The Korean peninsula remains a potential powder keg - perhaps even more than the Balkans. The difference is that in the latter, NATO has existed as a viable multilateral organization to contain conflicts, while no similar structure exists in the region of Northeast Asia. The solution to the long-running conflict of the Korean peninsula will be found through diplomatic/political means and through the application of arms control and disarmament techniques to reducing the instruments of conflict. Settlement of the Korean war cannot be left to the US and North Korea alone, nor to the two Koreas. The war defined modern Korea, and was a multilateral conflict, and so peacemaking must also involve all former combatants, as well as those with direct interests, such as Japan, which has an immediate concern in peaceful settlement, and should be given observer status at Geneva II.

The present situation retains all the urgency of the past - particularly as China assumes an expanding role in the region's military and economic affairs. Two major variables emphasize the desirability of seeking a stable international order (instead of a US-imposed one) in the region:

* A sudden collapse of North Korea would create a new and dangerous situation, and will affect China's vital security interests, since the Korean peninsula has been a traditional avenue of invasion - from the Japanese shogun Hideyoshi, through the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, and the Korean war, when General MacArthur threatened to attack China beyond the Yalu River border. These traditional concerns could tempt Beijing to either prop up a weak regime or impose one of its own choosing. This would bring the Seoul government into direct confrontation with China, and could lead to rapid escalation of tensions, probably involving the US.

* Japan's relative defense passivity, and ability or will to interfere in Korean affairs, remains an important factor today, but cannot be regarded as permanent. Japan is often characterized as the Switzerland of Asia - but can afford this low defense profile only under the US-Japan Security Treaty. After the demise of the long-running LDP series of pro-American governments, successor coalitions find it increasingly difficult to justify the partnership. Likewise, criticism of the US-Japan connection by Americans frequently addresses the trade imbalance, and Japan's "free ride" in defense. The deployment of US forces in Okinawa may be coming to an end due to local opposition, and Tokyo's inability to convince voters of the need to continue the relationship with Washington. A US pullback to the central Pacific, would probably prompt Japanese hawks to call for a more forward defense policy - especially if North Korea continues to develop missiles which can reach Tokyo. The tragedy of Korean geography is to be located in a zone surrounded by three giants - Japan, China and Russia. The US presence has helped to keep the delicate balance in the region - but also has been seen as an obstacle to achieving national reunification in Korea. As important, the US commitment to East Asia has been a powerful restraint on Japanese insecurities. Remove the US presence, and Japanese security policy will see the Korean peninsula as its pre-eminent anxiety. The first challenge is to keep the US engaged in the region, and yet not allocate all strategic and security responsibility to it. The second challenge is to design and implement a process which will allow the regional parties to have a significant input on strategic and military questions. There is now - as a result of the collapse of the Soviet system - a window of opportunity as well as a need for establishing a new set of institutions to deal with potential threats to peace and security. Numerous indicators confirm that the US will not and cannot carry the burden of regional policeman indefinitely. It will be necessary to shift some of this burden while the world is not distracted by polarizing conflicts. It is an opportunity similar to the early 1920s, when the Washington conference dealt with the prospect of rearmament, and with an ambitious and expanding Japanese nation anxious to catch up with the earlier industrializing states in naval strength and imperial territory. The Washington Treaty tried to freeze the existing balance of power, and ended by generating resentment in Japan where it was felt the Treaty relegated Japan to second-class status because of the naval limitations. In a parallel sense, China is the dissatisfied power today - and sees opposition to its "rightful and sovereign interests" in Taiwan, Tibet, and the South China Sea. The prospect of a united Korea aligned against it would only exacerbate anxieties. Thus, China would also oppose Geneva II if it was seen as diluting her influence in the Korean question.

8. Implications For Canada

Canada has an abiding interest in Korea, dating from the missionaries of the 19th century, and through participation in the Korean war, and into the most recent diplomatic and trade activities there. Nevertheless, the general perception of Canada in the Asia Pacific region is one of minor relevance, especially given the relatively low priority given to security and diplomatic activities in

the past, and the emphasis on relations with the US and NATO.

Canada has in recent years taken greater initiative in the Asia Pacific region in a number of international fora, and has made it clear that it desires to participate, and to make a contribution. Canada can make only minor impact with military forces, except in peacekeeping, but has an impressive record in arms control and disarmament, as well as being a catalyst for precipitating multilateral cooperation.

Canada can play a significant role on the Korean peninsula with proposals, sustained involvement, mediation, and strategic aid, just as normalization with China in 1971 facilitated China's entry into the international community thereafter. North Koreans know very little of Canada, and much work remains to be done in educating them.

9. Conclusion

The next several years provide an opportunity to parties interested in settlement of the Korean question. Old hostilities of the Cold War have significantly decreased, and new postures of confrontation have not yet hardened. North Korea may be brought back from the brink of collapse, providing that new crises do not emerge, and the interim commitments of the US, Japan, and South Korea are fulfilled. Furthermore, the momentum of multilateral cooperation from the Gulf War and Bosnian intervention is still active, but these circumstances are hardly permanent. It is therefore imperative that Canada - as a minor but objective participant in the post-Korean War settlement - take initiative to propose a four-stage completion of the efforts and sacrifices begun in 1950. A peaceful and united Korea would be an excellent beginning to the new millennium.

10. Endnotes

1. Technically, South Korea was not a party to the Military Armistice Agreement, although the DPRK was.

2. Both North and South Korea were admitted to the United Nations on September 17, 1991. Since 1947, the Korean question was considered a Cold War issue between East and West, and entry of either into the world body was impossible due to the inability of the US and USSR to reach agreement on admission. See Tae Hwan Kwak, "The United Nations and Reunification," in Kihl, Young Whan, ed. Korea and the World: Beyond the Cold War. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994), p. 301.

3. United Nations. Verification in All Its Aspects, Including the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Verification. (Ottawa: DFAIT, 1995), p. 34.

4. "Security and Arms Control: A Peninsula Approach," in Bon-Hak Koo, ed. The Korea/Canada North Pacific Arms Control Workshop: 1995 Proceedings. (Seoul: Korean Institute of Defense Analyses, 1995), p. 3. +

5. According to Paul Bracken, North Korea's nuclear program began in 1980, when work began on a 30 MW gas-graphite research reactor at Yongbyon. "The North Korean Nuclear Program as a Problem of State Survival." In Andrew Mack, ed. Asian Flashpoint: Security and the Korean Peninsula. (S. Leonards, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1993), pp. 85-96.

6. KEDO is an American-led consortium which offered to supply two 1,000 megawatt nuclear reactors (US$4.5 billion) in exchange for a North Korean agreement to shut down its plutonium-

making reactors.

7. A report by the South Korean Research Institute for National Unification states: "Pyongyang reinforced the simple logic of 'Kim Il Sung = Kim Jong Il' by positioning the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) as a medium in order to reconfirm Kim Jong Il's control over the party. The logic goes: Kim Il Sung = the KWP, and the KWP = Kim Jong Il. "'An Analysis of the Power Succession Process in North Korea: with Special Reference to Kim Jong-Il's Birthday Celebration on February 16.' (Seoul: Research Institute for National Unification, 1996 March. Series No. 3. Policy Studies Report.)

8. Signed October 1, 1953, and came into effect in November 1954.

9. DPRK MIA Issue. Michael Benge wrote in a letter to the Washington Post ('A POOR WAY TO RECOVER REMAINS', A16, 6/25/96) that 'there's a good chance that the Korean communists will be paid billions of dollars for remains the Defense Department cannot identify.' He said that the US was willing to pay US$3 million to the DPRK for what amounted to only five sets of remains from US soldiers. As there are an estimated 8,100 MIAs, this could amount to a US$5 billion aid program to the DPRK for what should be a purely humanitarian effort on the part of the DPRK. He suggested that if Vietnam is any model, the DOD program could prove a huge waste of money. NAPSNet Daily Report, 6/29/96.

10. FBIS-EAS-92-173, (4 September 1992), pp. 15-16.

11. FBIS-EAS-94-248, (27 December 1994), pp. 56-57.

12. See Robert E. Bedeski, The Fragile Entente: the 1978 Japan-China Peace Treaty in a Global Context. (Boulder: Westview, 1983)

13. FBIS-EAS-95-043, (6 March 1995), pp. 50-52.

14. FBIS-EAS-95-043, (6 March1995), article by Sin kak-su, Chief, section 1, Northeast Asian Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p.52

15. United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali declared that UN participation in both the replacement of the 1953 armistice with a peace treaty and eventual reunification of the peninsula are the aims of the world body. At a press conference in Seoul, he said that the UN would "continue to play a mediating role in inter-Korean dialogue and eventual reunification if so requested by both sides." Korea Newsreview. April 6, 1996, p. 6.

16. This was established in 1991 to establish dialogue between NATO and newly independent countries of Central and Eastern Europe and of the former Soviet Union.

17. Nations that sent troops to fight in the Korean War were Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Ethiopia, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the Philippines, South Africa and Turkey, France, Britain, New Zealand, Thailand, and the US.

III. NAPSNet Invites Your Responses

The Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network invites your responses to the points raised in the essay above. Below are some questions that some readers may find useful in putting the issues raised by the essay into a critical light. Please send responses to: napsnet-reply@nautilus.org

(preferably using "Response to Forum #7" as the subject). Responses will be considered for redistribution to the network only if they include the author's name, affiliation, and explicit consent.

* Prof. Bedeski argues that the interests of the international community in Korean peace conflict with the interests of Korean nationalists in reunification. Is the bridge that Prof. Bedeski seeks to build between these sets of interests sturdy enough to support a lasting solution to problems driving Korean conflict?

* Prof. Bedeski observes that the Military Armistice Agreement and its associated institutions have functioned as "a rudimentary military government" for Korea, and hence that reunification need not be "the invention of a new nation-state, but a shift of powers from sub-national units behaving as sovereign states to a unified peninsular regime exercising full sovereign powers." How useful is this way of thinking about the process of Korean reunification?

* Prof. Bedeski suggests the need for a reformulated Military Armistice Agreement as an "interim agreement" to stave off immediate threats of war, prior to development of a long-term peace settlement. Would this be the most efficacious first step?

* Prof. Bedeski supports the achievement of US-DPRK normalization of relations and of a US-DPRK bilateral peace treaty prior to reconvening the Geneva Conference that failed to achieve a Korean peace following the 1950-1953 war. Why does Prof. Bedeski favor this approach? What are the obstacles to this approach?

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