



Policy Forum 02-28A: Contending with a Nuclear North Korea



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Nautilus Institute Policy Forum Online: Contending with a Nuclear North Korea

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Contending with a Nuclear North Korea

By Henry Sokolski

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I. Introduction

Henry Sokolski, Executive Director The Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, argues that now that North Korea has admitted that it has been secretly enriching uranium for nuclear weapons and insisted that it has a right to possess them, the United States and its allies are faced with three security problems. First, they limit the instability Pyongyang's nuclear program might cause. Second, they must prevent North Korea's example from encouraging other countries from proliferating. Third, they must encourage the current North Korean government to become one that is willing to self-disarm. Consequently, the U.S. and its allies must do all they can to encourage the tyrannical militaristic regime in Pyongyang to give way to a less hostile one by shoring up allied defenses and playing a far more active role in supporting North Korean human rights.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Nautilus Institute. Readers should note that Nautilus seeks a diversity of views and opinions on contentious topics in order to identify common ground.

II. Essay by Henry Sokolski

"Contending with a Nuclear North Korea"

By Henry Sokolski, Nonproliferation Policy Education Center

Overview

Now that North Korea has broken out of its moratorium on producing plutonium, admitted that it has been secretly enriching uranium for nuclear weapons and insisted that it has a right to possess them, the U.S. and its allies are faced with three security problems. First, they limit the instability Pyongyang's nuclear program might cause. Second, they must prevent North Korea's example from encouraging other countries from proliferating. Third, they must encourage the current North Korean government to become one that is willing to self-disarm.

This paper explains why. First, it reviews the history of North Korea's nuclear activities and repeated cheating on nonproliferation pledges it has made over the last 20 years. Second, it details how Pyongyang might increase its nuclear weapons capabilities and assesses the risks of trying to cut some new nuclear deal with Pyongyang as compared to bolstering several factors that are already constrained North Korea's nuclear activities.

Complimenting these external constraints, the paper recommends several steps the U.S. and its allies should take to reduce and ultimately neutralize the North Korean nuclear threat. First, the U.S. and its allies should ask Pakistan, Russia and China to help the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) detail what Pyongyang illicitly imported to help it produce nuclear weapons materials. Second, the U.S. needs to work with others to interdict any possible future transfers to and from North Korea and Pakistan (or any other state) that might help other states acquire nuclear weapons. Finally, the U.S. and its friends must do all they can to encourage the tyrannical militaristic regime in Pyongyang to give way to a less hostile one by shoring up allied defenses and playing a far more active role in supporting North Korean human rights.

These recommendations are sure to be controversial. A brief review of events leading up to the current crisis and an analysis of how great the North Korean nuclear threat might be, though, helps explain why they are called for

Pyongyang's Nuclear Cheating North Korea's earliest nuclear activities date back to the 1960s. Most historians, however, believe that Pyongyang's nuclear weapons efforts began in earnest in the mid-1970s, shortly after U.S. intelligence officials caught South Korea trying to make a nuclear weapon of

its own. U.S. officials got Seoul to end this effort and calmed Seoul's fears about President Carter's earlier interest in pulling U.S. troops out of Korea. Unfortunately, they were far less quick to spot Pyongyang's nuclear weapons efforts. In fact, it was not until the early 1980s that U.S. spy satellites first detected construction of a military production reactor in Yongbyon.

This discovery prompted a flurry of diplomatic activity. The U.S. consulted with Russia; Moscow consulted with North Korea, and in 1985, the first nuclear nonproliferation deal with Pyongyang was struck: North Korea agreed to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), which forbade Pyongyang from acquiring nuclear weapons and required it to open up to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections. The Russians, in exchange, offered to sell North Korea several light water power reactors. It took Pyongyang exactly a year and a half to circumvent this deal. Instead of allowing IAEA inspections 18 months after signing the NPT, as the treaty required, Pyongyang took full advantage of IAEA miscommunications and managed to put inspections off for an additional 5 years. At the same time, it finished its military production reactor and powered it up early in 1986 -- again, without allowing IAEA inspections as the NPT required.

In a belated effort to address these transgressions, the U.S. and its allies persuaded Pyongyang late in 1991 to sign a joint denuclearization declaration with South Korea that prohibited either nation from building uranium enrichment or plutonium chemical separation plants. To help seal this deal, the U.S. withdrew its tactical nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula. This deal, unfortunately, fared no better than the others: Even before the ink was dry, North Korea, we now know, began operating a large chemical reprocessing plant at Yongbyon. To add insult to injury, when Pyongyang finally allowed IAEA inspectors access to its nuclear facilities in 1992, it was caught lying about how much nuclear weapons material it had produced. Finally, in 1993, with at least a bomb's worth of separated plutonium in hand -- and, according to the CIA, in the form of a nuclear weapon -- Pyongyang simply blocked further nuclear inspectors and announced it was bolting from the NPT.

It was at this juncture that the U.S. made its fourth nuclear deal with Pyongyang. Anxious to avoid confronting North Korea's nuclear cheating (and to extend international adherence to the NPT at an upcoming 25-year review conference), the Clinton administration was willing to be generous. Acceding to Pyongyang's demand for two modern U.S.-designed reactors, Clinton promised Pyongyang annual heavy fuel oil shipments equivalent to nearly 10 times the amount of energy North Korea might have produced if it had completed all the reactors it had under construction. In exchange, Pyongyang promised to freeze work at its known plutonium producing facilities and to come into compliance with its NPT obligations when roughly half of the promised U.S.-designed reactor project was completed.

As generous as the deal was, Pyongyang, again, chose to dishonor it. In fact, within 24 months of the agreement's signing in October of 1994, U.S. intelligence judged that North Korea had already built "one, possibly two" nuclear weapons. This meant that contrary to the deal's terms, which required North Korea to "consistently take steps to implement" its 1992 pledge with South Korea not to possess nuclear weapons, the intelligence community believed that Pyongyang was secretly hoarding them. Clinton administration officials knew this. They, however, disputed the intelligence and instead insisted that the deal had "eliminated" the Korean nuclear threat.

Late in 1997 and 1998, though, additional intelligence emerged that Pyongyang was testing high-explosive implosion devices for nuclear weapons and was working at several potential covert nuclear weapons sites. The Clinton administration, heckled into action by Congress and news leaks, again, bought time to cut yet another deal with Pyongyang. After more than a year of consultations with North Korea (and a promise of more than 500,000 additional tons of food aid), Clinton, at last, sent U.S. experts to visit one of the suspect sites. In the interim, newspapers reported that U.S. satellites had photographed North Koreans removing equipment from the site. When after nearly a year of

public debate and negotiations, the spot was finally inspected, nothing suspect could be found.

Unfortunately, one of the 12 suspect sites that the intelligence community tried but failed to convince Clinton officials to get Pyongyang to open up was Mount Chun Ma, which a North Korean defector to China revealed was "processing" uranium. Undaunted, the intelligence community, in March 1999, formally notified Clinton officials that North Korea was developing a covert uranium enrichment program, probably with help from Pakistan.

Several months later, Congress weighed in. It required the President to certify that North Korea was not secretly enriching uranium before giving North Korea any more heavy fuel oil. Clinton answered by claiming that North Korea was fully compliant with the nuclear deal, and that he lacked sufficient evidence to prove North Korea was covertly working to enrich uranium. This drew congressional protests, but construction of the two promised U.S. -- designed reactors -- each of which would over 50 bombs' worth of weapons-grade plutonium during the first 12 to 15 months of normal operation -- continued, as did the heavy fuel oil shipments. The White House even considered a possible missile deal with Pyongyang and a Presidential visit to Pyongyang.

Then presidential elections came with Bush's emergence as the victor. All bets seemed to be off for further deal making with Pyongyang. Promoters of the Agreed Framework, who were still in government, though, soon sensed that Bush lacked any clear alternative to offering Pyongyang "positive incentives" to behave. Was North Korea's continued stiffing of IAEA inspections a violation of the 1994 deal? The engagement faction said no, the critics of the Clinton policy said yes. Nothing was decided.

Then something unexpected occurred: In December 2001, the intelligence community admitted publicly that it had judged in the mid-1990s that North Korea had "produced one, possibly two nuclear weapons." Although buried in a report to Congress on missile development, this finding immediately turned the spotlight on a disturbing question: If North Korea already had built one or more weapons and was hiding them in violation of the 1994 deal, wouldn't it be reasonable to assume that North Korea was still conducting a covert nuclear weapons program? The answer from the intelligence community: Probably, but since no one had yet asked the community formally to review the matter in a national intelligence estimate, the intelligence community had no definitive view.¹

Why was there no such request? Almost certainly because supporters of the Agreed Framework knew what the answer would be and feared it would spell the end of the 1994 deal. Sometime in the spring of 2002 year, after President Bush had identified North Korea as a member of the Axis of Evil, though, supporters of further engagement were put on the defensive. After extensive internal debate, their critics prevailed and the intelligence community finally was asked to do a formal estimate.

What they discovered, when they looked, was clear evidence that North Korea was covertly developing the means to enrich uranium. The rest -- including North Korea's angry admission to cheating when confronted with this intelligence -- is now history.

Reassessing the North Korean Nuclear Threat

Until North Korea's recent nuclear confession, most security analysts assumed Pyongyang had one to two bombs' worth of separated plutonium that it might turn into bombs but that it could only do so if it broke out of the 1994 Agreed Framework. After Pyongyang's admission that it had nuclear weapons and its insistence that it had a right to possess them, though, intelligence findings that

Pyongyang already had built one or more bombs and the view that Pyongyang would cheat whenever it served its strategic purposes were taken much more seriously.

A debate over a number of issues has now ensued. Should we still believe that our best hope to contain Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions is to continue or expand the 1994 deal? What are the security implications of North Korea's nuclear arming? Are there no other factors other than the 1994 deal that might constrain Pyongyang?

Most of the 1994 deal's backers (now including the governments of South Korea, Russia, and China), insist that the U.S. should continue to support the Agreed Framework. They are particularly anxious that Pyongyang be coaxed back to observing the deal's freeze on plutonium production. Without this restraint, Pyongyang, they worry, will be free to make 50 or more bombs a year.

Certainly, if the U.S. and its allies can persuade Pyongyang to cease its plutonium related activities, they should. Given North Korea's admission that it already has plutonium weapons and is working on uranium bombs, though, the question arises of just how much the U.S. should concede to reinstate the plutonium restraints. Two important details, which have only emerged since Pyongyang's nuclear confession, suggest the answer is substantially less than one might otherwise think.

The first of these details, corroborated by the most recent public Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimates, is that even without a freeze, Pyongyang would need at least another half-decade before it could begin to produce a large amount of plutonium annually. Until then, it could only creep out of the moratorium.

Pyongyang today is suspected by U.S. and Asian intelligence agencies of having between one and five plutonium weapons. It could produce about five more plutonium weapons from the spent fuel that is being monitored under the freeze and could produce one more additional weapon's worth each year after this (this, as with all estimates below, assumes 5 kilograms of plutonium per bomb). Beyond this, North Korea could only generate much more plutonium annually if it completed work on its 50 Mwe and a 200 Mwe reactors. How much more plutonium could it then produce? According to the CIA, possibly more than 50 bombs worth per year. If these reactors were operated not at 100 percent capacity but at 70 percent for 300 days a year, though, they would produce less - about 35 bombs worth of plutonium. The CIA and other experts caution, however, that it would take several years - about 5 to 6 -- to complete these plants and to bring them on line.²

Factoring in all these facts, one gets the graph below:

Without a Freeze, How Many Plutonium Bombs Could N. Korea Have by What Date? (5 kilograms of plutonium per bomb)

Please see <https://nautilus.org/fora/security/pubombs.jpg> for the graph.

Looking at this chart, what's striking (besides the relative height of the lines for the year 2009) is how long-fused and relatively small Pyongyang's projected plutonium production breakout would be. In fact, there is no more than 10 bombs worth of difference between the number of plutonium bombs intelligence analysts believe North Korea now has and what it might acquire without a freeze by 2008. Beyond this, perhaps the important figures on the chart are the set of bars for the year 2003 representing what North Korea already has. These numbers - one to five nuclear weapons - when combined with the extensive range arcs of Pyongyang's most advanced missiles, give North Korea a virtual arsenal that will force the U.S. and its allies to have to defend against Pyongyang striking not one or five, but scores of possible targets.

This, then, brings us to the second set of projections, which highlight how by 2008, Pyongyang's uranium enrichment program alone might enable it to produce as many as 30 bombs. This point and the data that supports it are plotted on the next chart below. It displays the latest high and low estimates of how many bombs' worth of uranium North Korea might produce irrespective of whether the 1994 plutonium freeze is still in place. The low estimate reflects the most conservative reading possible of the CIA's latest official public projection. The high estimate is based on newspaper accounts of Administration background briefs as well as separate off-the record comments made by senior public officials. What's noteworthy is how large the projections are. With the high projection or even a median produced by dividing each high projection by half, North Korea could produce an arsenal of between 18 to 36 uranium weapons by 2009, exclusive of any plutonium bombs it might decide to acquire.

Please see <https://nautilus.org/fora/security/ubombs.jpg> for the graph on "How Many Uranium Bombs Could N. Korea Have Irrespective of a Plutonium Freeze?"

These numbers are fairly large relative to Pyongyang's plutonium potential. In fact, the difference between the total number of weapons that the DPRK could conceivably produce by 2009 with a freeze in place and the total number it could acquire without freeze is some 45 to 60 weapons. These numbers are hardly trivial. Yet, ultimately they are of less military significance than the difference between North Korea having no nuclear weapons and the number of bombs - some 9 to 40 weapons - it could have in 2009 even if the 1994 plutonium freeze was kept in place. Certainly, those that argue that the 1994 plutonium freeze is our best protection against the North Korean nuclear threat beg this last point entirely.

Some of the Agreed Framework's backers, however, fully appreciate this. They have already begun to plea for the U.S. to go beyond supporting the plutonium moratorium to strike some new deal with Pyongyang also to freeze or dismantle its uranium program. Could the U.S. attempt making such a deal and be assured of success without running unmanageable risks? They quickly say yes but three considerations strongly suggest the real answer is no.

First, verifying a North Korean uranium freeze or dismantlement is not yet possible. Unlike, North Korea's declared plutonium production facilities, whose locations are known and whose operation can be detected by satellite, much of North Korea's uranium enrichment program is out of sight at indeterminate underground locations.. Compounding this problem is the dearth of base-line data on Pyongyang's nuclear activities. In the case of Iraq, international inspectors roamed the country side from 1991 through 1998 visiting both declared and undeclared sites. In contrast, IAEA inspectors have only conducted one routine inspection of North Korea's declared nuclear facilities and that was ten years ago. Finally, with centrifuge enrichment technology the need to centralize production at a single site is far less than with plutonium production. Instead of running 3,000 centrifuges at one site to produce several bombs' worth of uranium annually, groups of centrifuges numbering in the hundreds could be hidden in several of North Korea's 8,000 to 12,000 caves. With North Korea's uranium program, then, checking against some manifest is not yet in the cards: We are still clearly in the snoop and spy mode and can neither trust nor verify.

Second, and related, is Pyongyang's repeated violation of its previous nuclear nonproliferation pledges and its latest most blatant violation of the NPT. If the U.S. and its allies were to try now to resolve these transgressions by simply striking yet another deal, it is difficult to see how it could not be seen by North Korea and the world as anything but act of weakness. North Korea could be counted upon to demand yet more tribute in exchange for yet another promised freeze or partial dismantlement and followed by more cheating. Meanwhile, South Korean political factions who oppose continued stationing of U.S. troops in Korea could use the conclusion of any new deal to help justify asking the U.S. to withdraw some or all of its troops. After all, if the new deal solves the

nuclear threat and allows increased harmony between North and South Korea, why must the U.S. continue to provide troops to defend against an attack from the North?

How Japan might respond to all of this is unclear. It could follow Seoul's example by asking the U.S. to reduce troop levels in Japan as well. This, in turn, might be misread by China to encourage more vigorous action to reunite with Taiwan or by Pyongyang to "confederate" with Seoul, either of which could cause military tensions or war. Then, there is the worry that Japan might react not by asking U.S. troops to leave or by tightening security ties with the U.S., but by choosing to remilitarize. This could entail Japan going nuclear and not just with one or two weapons, but with hundreds or thousands of bombs. China, who has held back from militarizing its own surplus stockpile of nuclear weapons materials, could respond by deploying 1,000 to 2,000 additional weapons itself. These numbers are large. Indeed, they are so great, they could force the U.S. and Russia to reconsider going through with their announced mutual strategic arms reductions.

Finally, what impact might such deal making have on NPT member states who have either tried to develop nuclear weapons or have quietly thought about acquiring them? For such states -- like Algeria, Egypt, South Korea, Taiwan, Iran, Libya, Syria, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia -- the message clearly would be that cheating on the NPT pays and that repeated cheating pays repeatedly. Another bad message, meanwhile, could be conveyed to nations -- such as Russia, China, Pakistan, Israel, India, and now North Korea -- that might choose to transfer nuclear weapons capabilities to NPT states. For them the lesson learned would be that the U.S. will not penalize nuclear enablers, so long as they don't get caught publicly making their transfers.

None of this is attractive. Most of it, however, is far from inevitable. Although North Korea has announced its intention to resume operation of its one complete reactor and to finish construction of its two uncompleted reactors, it's unclear just how quickly it will get its work done and to what extent, if any, it will use the plutonium produced to make bombs. A key reason why North Korea cannot be counted on to do its worst relates to how its neighbors might react. It is unclear how much Russia and China favor having the U.S. immediately reduce its presence and influence in East Asia. Yet, neither are interested in seeing North Korea provoke Japan to militarize or encouraging Seoul and Tokyo to strengthen their security ties to Washington. In their eyes, overt North Korean missile or nuclear activities are more likely to undermine their security interests than not: They could easily accelerate U.S. regional defense efforts and possibly force Russia or China to have to respond with some military build up of their own when they are least interested in doing so. That's why both Russia and China went to such great lengths privately and publicly in high-level visits to Pyongyang in 1998 and 2000 to keep Kim Jong Il from resuming missile tests over the Sea of Japan (and, it should be noted, were successful).

On this point, little has changed since 2000. What has, however, is Russia's and China's leverage over Pyongyang, which is far greater than what it was a decade ago and which is only likely to grow. Russia will soon be selling both North and South Korea military equipment. How it conducts this trade is of signal importance to Pyongyang. China, meanwhile, must deal with a new set of North Korean refugee issues. How China handles these matters could have a significant impact on the survivability of the North Korea regime. China, (who supplies North Korea with nearly all the fuel and much of the food its military and civil sectors use) also has an increasing need to please government-supported investors in Seoul.

Finally, there is the question of Pyongyang's growing desire to secure substantial financial help from Europe, Japan, and international financial institutions - e.g., the Asian Development Bank, The World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund -- in which the U.S. and Japan are key members. North Korea can ramp up its strategic military activities but not without putting freeze on its chances of garnering Western financial credits. Locally, the harm such military activities would have on

Japanese and South Korean financial aid would be even more direct: It would not only suspend (as it has already) talks with Tokyo about payment of World War II reparations (worth as much as \$10 billion), but could risk critical private investment and continued illicit currency transactions from Japan and South Korea.³

What to Do

These last points suggest that North Korea's behavior might be leveraged at least to keep it from substantially exceeding its current level of nuclear and missile activity. So long as Russia and China have reason to believe closer U.S. security cooperation with Japan and South Korea is likely as a response to North Korean nuclear misbehavior, Moscow and Beijing are likely to leverage North Korea from engaging in additional nuclear and missile provocations. In this regard, U.S. missile defense cooperation with Japan and South Korea could help keep Russia and China focused on restraining Pyongyang.

Also, anything the U.S. could do to increase the credibility of its declared defense strategy of going deep conventionally against Pyongyang if it ever attacked would be helpful. Currently, it appears North Korea does not believe U.S. and South Korean forces are either able or willing to execute this strategy. The proof here is simple: Almost all of North Korea's military might is deployed within 100 miles of the inter-Korean border rather than spread more evenly to absorb or counter a deep strike against Pyongyang. One low-cost way to change North Korea's low opinion of our defense plans would be to conduct more U.S. and allied war games (perhaps with Chinese and Russian military officers present or participating) to help determine how best to strengthen the current U.S.-Korean defense plan. Whatever else that can be done to make our defense plans against North Korea more credible, including new training, research, and acquisition should be encouraged. Doing this will help assure Russian and Chinese interest in curbing North Korean offensive behavior and encourage Pyongyang to shift resources that otherwise would go to nuclear weapons to conventional defenses instead.

The U.S. and its allies should also reinforce North Korea's worries that the more it militarizes the less bright its prospects are to secure Western investment or trade. Whatever is done here ought to compliment U.S. and allied efforts to secure North Korean adherence to the IAEA and NPT. The IAEA Board of Governors late in November of 2002 passed a resolution calling on North Korea to "provide to the Agency all relevant information concerning the reported uranium enrichment program", to "cooperate in opening all relevant facilities" to IAEA inspections, and to "give up any nuclear weapons programs in a verifiable manner." The resolution calls on North Korea to act immediately on these requests, before the IAEA's next meeting in March 2003. Pyongyang's initial, immediate response was to reject the resolution as being one-sided and to announce its intent to resume operation and construction of its plutonium producing reactors.⁴

This resolution and Pyongyang's rejection of it raises two questions. First, what should the U.S. and its friends do to increase the likelihood of North Korea complying (or at least getting as many nations as possible seized with the need to act against NPT violators such as North Korea)? Second, what should the U.S. and its allies do if -- as is now likely -- North Korea continues to violate the NPT or decides after having violated the treaty to formally withdraw from it?

In answer to the first question, the U.S. and its allies need to get as much information (with or without North Korea's cooperation) on Pyongyang's illicit nuclear activities. The U.S. and its allies should start by approaching those nations that exported or transferred illicit nuclear items to North Korea's enrichment program - e.g., Pakistan, Russia, and China - to help detail precisely what North

Korea imported. Up until recently, Japan, was the largest foreign aid donor to Pakistan after the U.S. The U.S., meanwhile, is cooperating on a number of fronts with Russia's nuclear industry and with Pakistan, Russia, and China on the war against terrorism. U.S. and allied access to these countries, in short, is available. Whatever is learned from these parties could then be passed on to the IAEA, and from there to the UN Security Council. Beyond this, the U.S. should encourage those nations that possess appropriate surveillance satellites, to monitor activities at North Korea's known nuclear sites to detect if North Korea has restarted them and pass this information on to the IAEA as well.

Assuming North Korea continues to ignore the IAEA's demand that it give up its nuclear weapons programs, the U.S. and its allies will have to hedge against yet another danger: The transfer of nuclear technology or materials from North Korea to enable others to violate the NPT. The U.S. is now building coalitions to disarm countries who are violating their pledges not to acquire weapons of mass destruction (e.g., Iraq) and has established defense coalitions to defend against nations that have fully succeeded in violating such pledges (e.g., against a now nuclear-armed North Korea). Now, the U.S. must prepare with like-minded nations - e.g., NATO members, Japan, South Korea, and others -- to interdict illicit trade in weapons of mass destruction capabilities. Legal authority for such action is already available: In 1991, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution that found proliferation of all kinds to be a threat to international peace and security. If more authority is desired, additional UN resolutions could be struck. In the end, however, such interdictions are ultimately a form of self-defense.

In addition, the European Union and the other nations who have helped provide energy assistance to Pyongyang under the 1994 Agreed Framework and who have recognized North Korea diplomatically could announce their intent to suspend or terminate recognition if Pyongyang fails to heed the IAEA's demands. These nations and the U.S. should also make it clear that unless North Korea acts to comply, the next step will be to have the IAEA report to the UN Security Council that Pyongyang is in violation of its NPT obligations (this even if Pyongyang decides now to withdraw) and that the result will be a series of increasingly harsh economic sanctions. These sanctions could include cutting off Pyongyang from private investment, currency exchanges, normal commerce, consideration for international institutional financing, etc. These steps alone may not force Pyongyang to comply with the NPT but it will make Pyongyang pay a price for not doing so. As such, these steps will make other nations see that the U.S. and its allies take the IAEA and NPT seriously and thereby deter future North Koreas.

Finally, it should be understood that the measures recommended above will put tremendous pressure on North Korea to open up. This, in turn, should encourage the current government to change or give way to less hostile rule. Some might object that this is regime change and is overly ambitious. Yet, the best examples we have of nations giving up their nuclear weapons programs - Argentina, South Africa, Ukraine, and Brazil - are all cases that were occasioned by their governments' transitions toward much more liberal self-rule. If we are serious about achieving the same results with North Korea, we need to understand that ultimately nothing less will be needed here as well.

Of course, what the U.S. and other nations might do to encourage this result may be limited. Yet, at a minimum, the US and its allies should spotlight human rights abuses in North Korea and encourage the freer, safer movement of North Korea refugees to and from other states including China. All of these states are members of UN conventions regarding the free immigration. Yet, to date, China has forcibly repatriated thousands of North Koreans against their will. The U.S. and its allies should approach Beijing and address its concerns that any refugee exodus not become a burden on China and that other nations assume the responsibility of absorbing these expatriates. Making sure these refugees and their stories can get out, however, is critical to making sure that the

contradictions and impracticalities of North Korea's current government are brought fully into play to produce either reform or, as with the Soviet Union, an eventual liberating collapse.⁵

1. See, U.S. National Intelligence Council, "Foreign Missile Developments and the Ballistic Missile Threat Through 2015, Unclassified Summary of a National Intelligence Estimate, December 2001, go to http://www.odci.gov/nic/pubs/other_products/Unclassified_ballisticmissilefinal.htm

2. For a complete discussion of public estimates regarding North Korea's nuclear bomb making capabilities see, The Nonproliferation Policy Education Center's analysis "Beyond the Agreed Framework: North Korea's Atomic Bomb Making Capabilities - 2003-2009," at www.npec-web.org. Also see, Larry Niksch, "North Korea's Nuclear Program," Congressional Research Issue Brief IB91141, November 8, 2002, on the web at <http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/crsIB91141.pdf> ; and David Albright, Solving the North Korean Nuclear Puzzle (Washington, DC: The Institute for Science and International Security, 2000), pp. 111-65.

3. For a fulsome analysis of North Korea's current economic, diplomatic, and military context see, Nicholas Eberstadt, "The Strategic Balance in the Korean Peninsula, 2002/2003: Something's Got to Give," in Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg, eds., Strategic Asia: 2002/2003 (Washington, DC: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2002).

5. For a discussion of these points and additional references, see Henry Sokolski, Best of Intentions: America's Campaign Against Strategic Weapons Proliferation (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001).

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.

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