Practically Unusable: A North Korean Nuclear Device

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Exactly when North Korea will detonate another device is anyone's guess. But let's remember, aside from the "glorious" details such as type and yield, North Korea's nuclear capabilities are ultimately only good for committing national suicide or calling for talks. When North Korea calls for talks, they're approaching the international community as a pauper with hat in hand, asking for money or else... It is possible, but extremely unlikely North Korea would risk swift and devastating retaliation by attempting to launch a missile or nuclear device at any third country. It's time to talk with China about a new and stabilizing framework with North Korea on the inside instead of on the outside.

Broad Interests

The U.S. and China desperately need a broad consensus to manage and integrate the region amid divisive inter-related issues such as maintaining Taiwan Strait security, preventing a Sino-Japanese crisis from deteriorating, preventing tensions in disputed waters, and dissuading Japan and South Korea from developing nuclear weapons of their own.

Other countries in Asia want to see "adult leadership" from D.C. and Beijing so as not to be forced to choose sides. This is even more important as the "Two Asias" (Economic Asia and Security Asia) seem to grow more irreconcilable. The more resources consumed by "Security Asia" the fewer resources available to keep "Economic Asia" vibrant. Talk is the cheapest option we presently have.

North Korea is clearly a problem. However, the United States and China have much broader interests in the region and globally than North Korea. Yet both superpowers have to take a break from keeping a collective 1.7 billion people gainfully employed to prevent just one (or at most a handful of) North Korean from committing national suicide and taking an unknowable but surely catastrophic number of innocent lives with them.

Creating a framework to addresses the nuclear insecurities of the five parties provides for common ground and brings North Korea INTO a structure rather than ISOLATING North Korea. The United States and China are the only two powers capable of creating such a viable security framework with the other Northeast Asian countries.

Limited time offer

Isolating North Korea got us where we are now, mate. A brief window of opportunity to create a strategic shift in relationships opened up when the leadership in all Northeast Asia countries changed. The United States is a Pacific Power and part of Northeast Asia security architecture. Once this opportunity is gone, squandered or ignored, it will likely never return.

This will not be easy, but US President Richard Nixon and China's Chairman Mao Zedong proved strategic shifts are possible; so did US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. Presidents Obama and Chairman Xi can do the same - if the political will exists.

-Roger Cavazos, NAPSNet contributor

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