

“The Korean Problem”

Recommended Citation

Peter Hayes, "“The Korean Problem”", Supporting Documents, April 12, 2006,
<https://nautilus.org/supporting-documents/the-korean-problem/>

Presentation to Defense and Strategic Studies Course
Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies
Australian Defence College
Canberra

Talking Points for Videoteleconference

April 12, 2006

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1. State Of The Nuclear Issue

The regional proliferation dynamic has accelerated
US policy is now containment + rollback "lite"

2. Brief Background On the Agreed Framework:

Nuclear history for Koreans begins on August 6, 1945 when 50000 Koreans died; 23000 survivors returned to Korea

Cold war nuclear threats, DPRK countervailing strategy (subterranean)

South Korean proliferation efforts

US nuclear withdrawal

The KEDO deal: freeze for 2 light water reactors and ½ million tones of liquid coal per year

3. What Became Of The Agreed Framework:

NK frustration by 1998

NK 1998 missile test over Japan

NK enrichment program resumes

Bush's 3 years of malign neglect, irrevocable commitment to nuclear weapons by late 2004, fusion of party center and Bomb in NK nationalism

4. What Are The DPRK's Capabilities For Nuclear Weapons Production

fuel cycle complex, crude, indigenous, dirty, but works
missiles-no successful long-range missile tests; poor reliability
crude, ground, ship or aircraft-deliverable device

5. How Much Material Could It Have Generated

operating research reactor for 2 years, ~ 12-16 NWs of Pu over 2 years
reprocessing: no-one but NK knows how well it has worked
enrichment, likely zero actual enrichment

6. How Many Weapons

Max 2 nuclear weapons-worth of plutonium from late 80s, led to crisis when IAEA discovered discrepancies in dates, amounts of reprocessing
Roughly 6-8 weapons-worth of plutonium from stored spent fuel that was moved out of ponds in late 02/early 03
12-16 weapons-worth of plutonium from 2 years max operations of research reactor to today, assuming 100% operating efficiency of reactor
Maximum today: 20-24; likely zero-less than 10 actually weaponized; no tests may indicate lower numbers as NK no weapons to "waste" on tests

7. What Are The Prospects Now Given The Six Party Process

Six-party talks are stalled, moribund, and have enabled North Korea to evade its NPT obligations
At September 2005 round, ROK kick-started with its unrealistic 2 GWe power supply proposal; the parties issues Principles that led to an immediate verbal shootout between Hill and DPRK over provision of light water reactors and sequencing
If political will results in a breakthrough, which is low probability, then US and DPRK would converge on a roughly 6 month nuclear weapon dismantlement timeline at which point they would commence serious talks on light water reactor issue; it will then take roughly 2 years recertify that DPRK in compliance with IAEA safeguards and NPT obligations, at which time, light water reactor project could resume
US negotiators are hobbled still by US hardliners

8. US Strategy

United States is preoccupied with Iraq; domestic dissension with Republicans
Outsourced problem to China
United States pursuing a squeeze strategy based on the "Soprano state" theory but this theory does not address DPRK motivations to acquire and deploy nuclear weapons
DPRK rebuilding foundations of a new economy, for example, minerals investment in DPRK underway

Inter-Korean

Peninsula is calm
Seoul clear divergence with Washington over DPRK strategy, cutting its own deal
ROK has aligned with PRC;
Many talks, some investment, stop-start dynamic but steady cumulative progress
Non-nuclear strategy for Korea now rests in hands of South Koreans, not DPRK, which is committed to nuclear weapons short of a miraculous break-through in relations with White House.
New generation of cosmopolitan Koreans, north and south, are building new regional networks that will overtake their Old Guards and also transform regional inter-state security dynamics. This is the wild card.

Readings

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