

North Korea Contingency Planning and U.S.-ROK Cooperation



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Executive Summary

- Current internal dynamics in North Korea suggest a growing need for international cooperation on contingency planning, led by policy coordination between South Korea and the United States.
- An effective response to potential instability in North Korea requires a whole-of-government approach that integrates military and nonmilitary aspects of contingency planning.
- Interagency cooperation within both Seoul and Washington will be increasingly important as instability unfolds.
- The United States and South Korea should affirm a common vision for the future of the Korean peninsula and coordinate strategies regarding how to attain the agreed-upon end state.
- U.S.-ROK planning should incorporate efforts to have dialogue with China with the purpose of reassuring China that any future scenario will not harm Chinese interests. Such a dialogue might focus initially on practical coordination to deal with specific shared concerns.
- Any response to instability in North Korea will depend on the stage of contingency and functional issue, and requires a clear understanding of the appropriate form and sequencing of cooperation.
- Post-conflict stabilization tasks in North Korea include military disarmament, dismantlement of WMD and securing North Korea's long-term economic development in close collaboration with all stakeholders.

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The debate on the possibility of collapse or state failure in North Korea began in the early 1990s with the breakup of the Soviet Union and unfolding of market reforms in China. By the mid-1990s, North Korea's famine led many to believe that the regime was unsustainable and would follow the path of failed communist regimes in Eastern Europe.¹ Yet North Korea has survived despite facing relative isolation as a result of a dramatically changed international environment. The consensus among specialists from a 1997 international conference was that a "failed state" was the least likely outcome in the next five years given that North Korea would undertake fundamental reforms to sustain its economy, including through significant external support driven by fears about the implications of collapse.² It was generally believed that a reformist regime would emerge in Pyongyang, but forecasts on the long-term situation on the Korean Peninsula were wide-ranging.

Many observers have linked North Korea's missile and nuclear tests this year to internal factors. The tests are seen as part of Kim Jong-il's efforts to secure his succession amid mounting speculation about North Korea's political transition since his reported stroke in August 2008.³ Even at significant economic costs and as Kim's health inevitably continues to decline, these actions have aimed to project North Korea's national strength under his leadership while sending a message to the outside world not to interfere with the succession process. Since January 2009 media reports have drawn much attention to Kim's third son Kim Jong-un as designated successor, now believed likely to serve as a "puppet leader" within a collective leadership centered on Kim's brother-in-law Jang Song-taek of the National Defense Commission. But contradictory succession-related reports on the youngest son have appeared since 2003, and it remains highly uncertain how the leadership in Pyongyang will evolve after the death of Kim Jong-il.⁴ In contrast to a decade ago, however, many see economic reform and opening in North Korea as unlikely in the near term.⁵

* This report was written by See-Won Byun, Research Associate, with editorial guidance from Scott Snyder, Director, Center for U.S.-Korea Policy, The Asia Foundation.

¹ David S. Maxwell, "Catastrophic Collapse of North Korea: Implications for the United States," Nautilus Institute, 1996.

² Marcus Noland, ed., "Economic Integration of the Korean Peninsula," Special Report 10, Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 1998.

³ Scott Snyder, "Is North Korea Playing a New Game?" GlobalSecurity.org, June 22, 2009, <http://sitrep.globalsecurity.org/articles/090622395-is-north-korea-playing-a-new-g.htm>.

⁴ Kim Hyun, "Spy Agency Confirms N.K. Leader's Third Son as Successor: Lawmakers," *Yonhap*, June 2, 2009; Ken E. Gause, "The Rise of Kim Jong-Un," *Foreign Policy*, April 2009; Andrei Lankov, "Kim Jong-un Unlikely Candidate for NK Leader," *Korea Times*, June 5, 2009.

⁵ Donald Kirk, "Kim Jong Un: North Korea's Next Leader?" *Christian Science Monitor*, June 2, 2009, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0602/p06s04-woap.html>; Bruce Klingner, "Planning for a North Korea without Kim Jong-il," WebMemo #2059, The Heritage Foundation, September 11, 2008, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/wm2059.cfm>.

Previous studies on North Korea's future have projected various scenarios with little attention on how the international community should jointly respond to the range of possible outcomes. Signs of changing internal dynamics have reopened debate on the future of North Korea and, more importantly, the need for international cooperation on contingency planning to cope with potential instability in North Korea. The starting point for this discussion has been driven by the need for security coordination between the United States and South Korea. Given North Korea's perceived fragility, leadership succession and regime stability in North Korea are questions of increasing interest that must be included as part of the U.S.-ROK policy discussion on North Korea.

Several factors have heightened the need and opportunity to pursue planning for contingencies that may arise from North Korean instability. First, Kim Jong-il's health and the looming succession issue have placed concern about North Korea's capacity to manage a leadership transition at center stage. Second, the long-term social and political impacts of market reform and opening as well as the immediate impact of the global financial crisis pose possible threats to North Korea's internal stability. Third, leadership transitions in Seoul and Washington have resulted in a relative convergence of views on how to deal with North Korea.⁶ Fourth, favorable trends in regional relations, including enhanced cooperation with China and Russia, may enable discussions on expanding policy coordination on North Korean contingency. Fifth, North Korea's apparent inward focus in recent months challenges the prospect that efforts by outside parties will be successful in influencing internal dynamics.

Reports of Kim's ailing health since fall 2008 have prompted U.S. officials and scholars to call for resumption of U.S.-ROK negotiations on contingency planning for instability in North Korea.⁷ North Korea's previous crisis in 1998 stimulated the adoption of an initial plan (5029-98) between the U.S. and ROK militaries to respond to contingencies in the North, the first joint military plan to consider potential threats that might derive from North Korean state failure rather than aggression. An attempt to update that plan in 2005 was reported to address five scenarios including civil war; natural disasters; massive refugee flows; kidnapping of ROK citizens; and loss of control over Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). But efforts were ultimately set aside as a result of concerns under the Roh administration that such a plan might provoke Pyongyang and give the United States disproportionate influence on the direction of events on the Korean peninsula. Emerging issues that must be part of continued discussion include the question of how to respond to North Korea's nuclear weapons capacity and the implications of South Korean resumption of wartime command by 2012.⁸ Policy coordination discussions on North Korean instability scenarios have resumed under the Lee administration and will likely continue to take place with the Obama administration.

⁶ Kim Sung-han, "Collaboration with U.S. for a New North Korea Road Map," *JoongAng Ilbo*, November 7, 2008.

⁷ "U.S. Renews Call for N. Korea Military Action Plan," *Chosun Ilbo*, October 29, 2008; "Scholar Calls for North Korean Plan," *JoongAng Daily*, September 27, 2008.

⁸ "Seoul Shelves Combined Forces N.K. Contingency Plan," *Chosun Ilbo*, April 15, 2005.

This paper will identify the main issues on which the United States and South Korea would need to coordinate policies in response to possible North Korean instability at each stage of an unfolding contingency, with a focus on different functional areas of cooperation. It will highlight immediate priority areas for U.S.-ROK cooperation, identifying lead agencies and mechanisms for cooperation, and potential points of conflict in U.S.-ROK efforts to manage instability in North Korea. The assessment will attempt to provide a long-term framework for understanding U.S.-ROK contingency planning for North Korea.

Grappling with Scenarios for North Korea's Future

There have been many approaches to framing North Korean contingencies. Models of North Korea's future have included variations on the theme of regime survival or regime collapse. Most recently, a January 2009 report by the Council on Foreign Relations offers three scenarios for change in North Korea, including a managed succession, in which the current regime prevails under a new leadership; a contested succession which leads to regime change; and a failed succession which ultimately results in regime collapse.⁹ Another approach has been a comparative examination of political transition in the communist world based on experiences in Germany, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe, as well as "unification" models of German absorption or Hong Kong's one country, two systems. Andrew Scobell proposes five country-model scenarios for North Korea: "suspended animation" (Albania); "soft landing" (China); "crash landing" (Romania); and hybrid models of "soft landing/crash landing" (former Soviet Union) and "suspended animation/soft landing" (Cuba) – the closest to North Korea's current situation being the Cuban model of ad hoc reforms and regime continuity.¹⁰

In his 2004 report, Marcus Noland provides a quantitative analysis of the possibility of regime change in North Korea to assess the likelihood of a radical or gradual path of economic integration.¹¹ He presents three alternative scenarios: (1) "Cooperative Engagement," where the easing of North Korea's diplomatic tensions leads to an increase in foreign aid, its joining of multilateral development banks, and economic liberalization; (2) "Neo-conservative Dream," where a tougher approach by the international community results in the severing of aid and a decline in growth; and (3) "International Embargo," where all foreign aid is cut off due to a deterioration in North Korea's external relations. Noland's study indicates that the probability of regime change rises from scenario one to three, and suggests the most likely outcome of "muddling through" between the first two scenarios. In 1996 when North Korea appeared on the path of self-destruction as a result of the 1995 flooding disaster and Kim Il-sung's development strategy, David Maxwell proposed four collapse scenarios including "soft landing"

⁹ Paul B. Stares and Joel S. Wit, "Preparing for Sudden Change in North Korea," Council Special Report No. 42 (January 2009), http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/North_Korea_CSR42.pdf.

¹⁰ Andrew Scobell, "Projecting Pyongyang: The Future of North Korea's Kim Jong Il Regime," Strategic Studies Institute, March 2008, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/pub844.pdf>.

¹¹ Marcus Noland, *Korea After Kim Jong-Il*, Policy Analyses in International Economics 71, Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, January 2004.

scenarios of gradual unification based on South Korea's reunification plan, and more likely "hard landing" scenarios of increased instability that would require intervention.¹²

In light of Kim Jong-il's deteriorating health, Jun Bong-Geun of the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS) focused on the form rather than result of North Korea's "power shift," expanding on the three conventional scenarios of third generation succession; collective leadership; and military rule to include other possibilities including a power vacuum; power struggle; rule through proxy; and harmonious or disharmonious power-sharing.¹³ In an October 2006 article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, at a time of heated debate over Pyongyang's missile tests and nuclear threat, Robert Kaplan outlined prospects for North Korea's collapse in seven phases: (1) Resource depletion; (2) Failure to maintain infrastructure; (3) Rise of independent fiefs and widespread corruption; (4) Attempted suppression of fiefs by the Kim regime; (5) Active resistance against the central government; (6) Regime fracture; and (7) Formation of new national leadership – after which China emerges as the likely leader in an Asian power competition.¹⁴

An underlying problem in discussing North Korean instability is the difficulty of anticipating which factors are likely to be important in driving respective national responses. However, it is possible to identify possible drivers of instability such as the impact of economic reform and opening on North Korea's social and political structure; external factors; factional conflict or loosening control over the military; and the effects of continued isolation from the international community due to Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions. One might also consider short-term triggers of instability including Kim Jong-il's incapacitation or death; a coup d'etat; public riots as a result of economic hardship; and natural disaster or disease. There are also a range of external responses—some more unlikely than others—including unilateral intervention by South Korea, the United States, or China; bilateral or multilateral intervention by the U.S.-ROK alliance or six party partners respectively; intervention by international organizations such as the United Nations; and unification through absorption by the South.

Any response to North Korean instability is likely to be scenario-dependent. The U.S.-ROK response to each scenario will depend on how a crisis in North Korea unfolds, requiring clear planning in a range of areas that may differ by stage and functional area of cooperation. Responses to North Korean instability can be divided into the pre-contingency phase, characterized by rapidly deteriorating state control and anarchy internal to North Korea; the contingency phase, where no functioning state exists; and the post-contingency stage, where international stabilization efforts, possibly led by South Korea and/or other members of the international community, result in the re-establishment of political stability and new political leadership in Pyongyang. Primary functional areas that will require coordination in response to North Korean instability can

¹² Maxwell, 1996.

¹³ Jun Bong-Geun, "Scenarios of North Korea's Power Shift: After Kim Jong-il's "Reported Illness," IFANS Policy Brief No. 2008-7 (November 2008).

¹⁴ Robert D. Kaplan, "When North Korea Falls," *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 2006, <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200610/kaplan-korea>.

be further divided into the diplomatic and political dimension; the security dimension, the economic dimension; the humanitarian dimension; and the legal dimension.

The following section identifies major goals and issues in U.S.-ROK contingency planning on North Korea over three phases, with special consideration for each functional area of cooperation, in the process highlighting key challenges and potential opportunities for strengthened cooperation.

Phase I. Pre-Contingency: Preventive Planning

During the pre-contingency phase, there is an opportunity to engage in preventive planning with the primary focus on ensuring South Korea's internal security by containing potential spillover effects of instability. In a collapse scenario, the common strategic interest of main stakeholders South Korea, the United States, China, Russia, and Japan lies in the stability and economic prosperity of Korea. Diplomatic and political cooperation is a prerequisite for laying the foundation for achieving long-term objectives at the earliest stage of contingency. Essential in this effort is U.S.-ROK coordination with China, a key player given its unique position on North Korea bilaterally and internationally as North Korea's ally, a member of the UN Security Council (UNSC), facilitator of the Six Party Talks, and close partner of the United States. Prior consultations among the United States, South Korea, and China might address humanitarian aid operations; WMD control; triggers of military intervention; and Chinese red lines in response to U.S.-ROK intervention. Also keeping Chinese reactions in mind, any initial U.S.-ROK conceptual planning must also shape public perceptions by making clear that the sole goal is to manage instability rather than to induce regime change. Likewise, preparations for practical implementation must also be undertaken discreetly to avoid an escalation of misperceptions among Korea's neighbors that their interests may be harmed.

Advance U.S.-ROK diplomatic coordination would present the opportunity to define common objectives and outcomes so as to ensure that both sides are focused on achieving common goals and a common vision. Although "unified, democratic Korea" is understood as the ultimate objective shared and advocated by Seoul and Washington, it will be important to clarify precisely what this implies to both the United States and South Korea and the means that each side is willing to pursue in order to achieve that objective. The coordination effort in a pre-contingency phase should be designed to resolve contending perspectives and stakeholder interests within South Korea to minimize the possibility of domestic infighting that may result from South Korea's often fragmented policy approaches toward the North. In contrast, in the United States, there is likely to be insufficient consideration of strategic objectives or concrete plans for realizing those objectives.

Given the likelihood of political fragmentation based on narrow stakeholder interests within South Korea's bureaucracy, interagency coordination is essential to develop comprehensive planning that integrates political and military aspects of contingency

planning. South Korea currently has no overarching mechanism for coordination among such agencies as the Ministry of Strategic Planning and Finance, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and the Ministry of Justice. Although the U.S. and South Korean national security councils are likely to play a leading role within both governments, neither side has sufficient capacity to engage in long-term policy planning and coordination to manage such a significant political challenge. The ROK National Security Council has a total of 43 staff including less than five for North Korea contingency planning while U.S. agencies with the exception of the Department of Defense (DOD) lack resources to support long-term policy coordination efforts.

Another major challenge is the development of trust necessary to assure effective diplomatic coordination to reconcile national, bilateral, and multilateral efforts on North Korea. South Korea sees the United States and China as its primary diplomatic partners for dealing with sudden change in North Korea given the influence and interests of both powers on the peninsula as signatories of the 1953 Korean War Armistice.¹⁵ Although the United States and South Korea are expected to take the lead in coordinating a response to North Korean instability, debates over the desirable future Northeast Asian security architecture hint at conflicts resulting from conflicting security dilemmas faced by both China and Japan, among others. For example, U.S.-China bilateral cooperation on North Korea raises South Korean suspicions of being marginalized; Japan is willing to play a supporting role in U.S.-ROK alliance cooperation while seeing a China-led response to North Korean instability as the worst case scenario; U.S.-ROK-Japan alignment raises strategic concerns among Chinese security analysts. These conflicts of interest may vary on an issue-by-issue basis, especially as it relates to the sensitive question of conditions for intervention by outside parties to restore stability in North Korea.

The U.S. government has attempted to establish some principles governing a coordinated response among the United States, South Korea, and China, seeking assurances that the Chinese military will not cross the Yalu River into North Korea in response to instability, and guarantees that South Korea would take the lead in overseeing humanitarian operations in the North.¹⁶ Transparency in U.S.-ROK-China trilateral coordination is critical to minimize misperceptions and build strategic trust, especially between South Korea and China, making it necessary for both sides to establish a clear understanding of intentions and capabilities to build confidence at an early stage. The status of U.S.-China relations is another significant factor that will influence Seoul's China policy. Seoul is suspicious of being excluded from U.S.-China consultations on North Korea but also sees strong U.S.-China relations as conducive to managing North Korean issues and potential U.S.-China conflict as a major challenge.¹⁷

¹⁵ "Diplomatic Tasks to Prepare for North Korea Contingencies," *JoongAng Ilbo*, September 13, 2008.

¹⁶ Jay Solomon and Jason Leow, "Beijing Spurns U.S. Effort to Prepare in Event of Korea Leader's Demise," *Wall Street Journal*, November 7, 2008.

¹⁷ Lee Chang-hyung, Song Hwa-sup, Park Chang-kwon, Park Won-gon, and Kim Chang-soo, *China or the United States: China's Rise and Korean Security (Joongkukeenya Meekukeenya: Joonggukewi Boosanggwa Hankukeui Anjunbojang)*, Seoul, Korea: Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, December 2008.

Effective coordination of diplomatic actions requires strengthened intelligence-sharing capacities to ensure an accurate assessment of developments in North Korea, given the difficulties of distinguishing military and non-military indicators of instability. South Korea should strengthen its human intelligence capacity for analyzing North Korean affairs; establish a joint U.S.-ROK operations team such as the Combined Interagency Coordination Group (CIACG); strengthen South Korea's defense posture including patrol activities in the East and West Sea; and strengthen police-led security of strategic targets. Major security objectives in the context of political instability in the North will include WMD control; ensuring the safety of foreigners; preventing the accidental use of force along the demilitarized zone (DMZ); and addressing small-scale refugee inflows including the possibility of naval clashes with North Korean forces pursuing refugees who are most likely to move by sea rather than land.

From a legal perspective, the United States and South Korea should seek early approval from international organizations as part of planning for any possible stabilization operation in North Korea. Securing such an international mandate is likely to be especially important for meeting a potential challenge from China or winning Chinese cooperation with any international-led effort. Rather than relying on domestic law as a justification for intervention, the best option for establishing South Korea's right to intervene would be authorization from the UNSC, through which South Korea could intervene in the name of "humanitarian intervention" so as to win support from all permanent members of the UNSC.

Separating North Korean humanitarian and political issues is important at the early stage of contingency planning given the possibility that a North Korean humanitarian crisis might become politicized. The recent case of detained U.S. journalists in North Korea has again raised debate on how to approach humanitarian issues in North Korea, with some experts advocating a clear separation from politics and others arguing that any humanitarian intervention in North Korea is inevitably linked to political considerations.¹⁸ South Korea and China should begin quiet consultations on humanitarian cooperation on North Korea that lay aside political issues and focus on operational matters such as management of refugee inflows. Such consultations will also have to take into account the functions and responses of nongovernmental organizations (NGO)s, which are likely to play an increasingly important role both in service delivery and in shaping domestic and international public opinion.

As international experience has demonstrated, one of the biggest challenges in humanitarian cooperation is the coordination of multiple actors and processes to avoid duplication of activities. In addition to South Korea and China, the United Nations, United States, or UN Command might plausibly be called upon to coordinate an effective international humanitarian effort in North Korea. South Korea will likely be in the lead, but will need support and cooperation from international aid providers. China has thus

¹⁸ "North Korea's Nuclear and Missile Tests and the Six-Party Talks: Where Do We Go from Here?" Testimony before the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment and Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade, June 17, 2009, http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/hearing_notice.asp?id=1084.

far not participated in international humanitarian aid coordination toward North Korea, limiting the capacity of the international community to ensure effective and efficient resource allocation to the North. South Korea's recent contributions to peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq are important experiences from which to apply lessons for North Korea.

Finally, it is possible to consider ground transport and energy as two key potential sectors for early economic cooperation to ensure North Korea's development and integration into the regional economy in the long run.¹⁹ North Korea's neighbors would benefit from and support the rehabilitation of North Korean rail and road infrastructure which would boost regional economic growth as part of the major transportation corridors in Northeast Asia. Energy cooperation could also benefit from broader multilateral cooperation, the foundations for which have already been laid in the Six Party Talks. Prior coordination on solutions that might meet North Korean energy needs might encourage energy market development, waste reduction, coal supply rehabilitation, and foreign investment. Potential joint projects include regional power grids and oil or gas pipeline networks; as net energy importers Japan, South Korea, and China may be willing to support such investments in return for energy security despite significant technical constraints.

Phase II. Contingency: Internal Stabilization

The main objective of the contingency stage is internal stabilization in North Korea through proactive engagement plus international support. Effective management in the midst of a contingency will require multifaceted and multidimensional coordination among all involved countries. The South Korean army must be prepared—if called upon by political authorization—to lead the multinational and interagency stability and support operations in coordination with the major powers to most effectively deal with collapse of the North. From a South Korean perspective, ROK forces must take the initiative for unification while minimizing foreign intervention to avoid repeating the experience of the UN protectorate.²⁰ Four priority military missions to be pursued after North Korea's collapse include the establishment of security and stability; humanitarian relief operations; establishment of the security of nuclear facilities; and the disarmament, demobilization and resettling of the DPRK military.²¹ U.S.-ROK practical coordination with China remains essential to carry out such missions. For the undertaking of all interventions, the UNSC must establish a mandate to conduct post-conflict operations in North Korea and build a coalition among the key players to implement combined operations.

If instability begins to spread in North Korea and political control cannot be re-established, the issue of how to respond will immediately become a problem requiring an

¹⁹ Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, "A Security and Peace Mechanism for Northeast Asia: The Economic Dimension," Policy Brief, Peterson Institute for International Economics, April 2008, <http://www.petersoninstitute.org/publications/pb/pb08-4.pdf>.

²⁰ Moo Bong Ryoo, "The ROK Army's Role When North Korea Collapses Without a War with the ROK," U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, January 2001, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA394408&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>.

²¹ Maxwell, 1996.

international response—within which military or specialized tasks must be embedded as part of a successful response. The lack of political guidance supporting existing U.S.-ROK military planning for instability in the North should be corrected by the fashioning of a comprehensive approach that fully integrates military with nonmilitary aspects of planning.²² Military missions may face significant unanticipated obstacles without political and diplomatic prerequisites including international endorsement of or agreed participation in crossing the DMZ. Third-party intervention must be addressed through political or diplomatic measures first followed by defensive military measures, including full mobilization of ROK forces with U.S. support and a clear signal that deployment of forces is aimed toward stabilization.

Immediate security goals in the contingency phase will involve strategic reassurance as a first priority. For instance, China will need to be convinced that U.S.-ROK stabilization efforts do not undermine Chinese interests and Japan will need to be reassured that it will not be marginalized. Based on strategic reassurance efforts, there is an operational objective to de-conflict Chinese and ROK military missions and ensure Japanese logistical support to Korea. Finally, tactical coordination will be necessary to provide for the defense of Korea through the U.S.-ROK alliance. In the key priority area of WMD control, forces should be deployed to WMD-related facilities for immediate neutralization and eventual dismantlement under international auspices. This mission is most likely to involve U.S. Special Operation Forces (SOF), with ROK support.

The contingency phase also requires joint implementation of stabilization and humanitarian aid operations, with the military taking the lead to maintain security and order while laying the foundation for post-contingency reconstruction. With government and civilian support, the military would play a leading role in such tasks as the allocation of personnel and resources for relief operations; implementation of reconstruction projects; civil support; and the restoration of civilian administration. Tailor-made stabilization measures including civil-military and psychological operations would need to take into account specific characteristics of North Korean society and help meet both political and military goals of contingency planning, as humanitarian intervention will require support and cooperation from the North Korean people especially over time.

Humanitarian assistance should focus on short-term emergency relief and long-term national reconstruction. It is essential to coordinate all civil-military actors, which include central and local government agencies; international organizations; international financial institutions; donor states; domestic and foreign NGOs; foreign troops; and the private sector – based on a single coordination mechanism for intelligence-sharing and integration of activities. The extent of a refugee crisis would heavily depend on the effectiveness of humanitarian intervention. Minimizing the potentially serious spillover costs to North Korean neighbors would require such measures as border control; the creation of shelters within North Korean borders as well as in South Korea, China, and possibly Japan; strict implementation of international norms on the treatment of refugees; and the gradual transfer of humanitarian duties from military to civilian authorities.

²² Michael Finnegan, “Preparing for the Inevitable in North Korea,” PacNet #28B, Pacific Forum CSIS, April 28, 2009.

In the short term, North Korea will continue to rely on emergency aid, with development assistance and private capital more important to its long-term economic recovery. The allocation of aid to North Korea must thus be directed by the longer-term goal of phasing out humanitarian aid. South Korean experience in the North suggests that forms of engagement like Keumgang, Kaesong, and special economic zones such as Rajin-Sonbong offer limited benefits to broader society but can be useful as initial tactical steps toward North Korea's economic opening.²³ North Korean attitudes must also be pro-reform and pro-market for successful implementation of projects designed to minimize state involvement over the long run. Market-based, transparent engagement is thus important for facilitating North Korean learning of market principles and operations.

China's priority in the event of instability in North Korea is to prevent a massive inflow of refugees across the border to meet basic goals of ensuring law and order, social stability, and continued economic growth. People's Liberation Army (PLA) contingency plans suggest that Chinese forces would move into North Korean territory if necessary.²⁴ According to PLA researchers, contingency plans are in place in three possible missions in North Korea including humanitarian operations such as refugee assistance or disaster relief; peacekeeping operations such as serving as civil police; and environmental control measures to address nuclear contamination near the China-DPRK border and secure nuclear weapons and fissile material.²⁵ Current Chinese investments in disaster response suggest substantial civilian capacities in responding to a refugee crisis, including mechanisms for interagency coordination, intelligence gathering, and communications, in addition to frequent exercises and an extensive legal framework of official plans, laws, and regulations at all government levels.²⁶ However, it is important to note weaknesses such as a complex bureaucratic structure and inadequate resources and training. PLA officers have also noted that an attempt to close the Sino-DPRK border in an effort to control refugees would be difficult since it extends 866 miles and can be easily penetrated.²⁷

Unilateral Chinese intervention in North Korea is unlikely but may be triggered by various factors such as a North Korean request; an inability to contain spillover effects including massive refugee inflows; foreign intervention including entry of U.S. or ROK forces outside the UN framework; an absence of a prompt international response; and a

²³ Marcus Noland, "Between Collapse and Revival: A Reinterpretation of the North Korean Economy," Peterson Institute for International Economics, March 2001, <http://www.iie.com/publications/papers/paper.cfm?ResearchID=401>.

²⁴ Scott Snyder and Joel Wit, "China views: breaking the stalemate on the Korean Peninsula," USIP Special Report No. 183, February 2007, <http://www.usip.org/resources/chinese-views-breaking-stalemate-korean-peninsula>.

²⁵ Bonnie Glaser, Scott Snyder, and John Park, "Keeping and Eye on An Unruly Neighbor: Chinese Views of Economic Reform and Stability in North Korea," USIP Working Paper, United States Institute of Peace, January 3, 2008.

²⁶ Drew Thompson and Carla Freeman, "Flood Across the Border: China's Disaster Relief Operations and Potential Response to a North Korean Refugee Crisis," U.S.-Korea Institute, Johns Hopkins University, April 1, 2009.

²⁷ Glaser et al., 2008.

desire to provide humanitarian aid and protection to Chinese citizens in North Korea.²⁸ According to South Korean and U.S. analysts, China especially fears the possibility of joint U.S.-ROK intervention in North Korea as part of efforts toward unification and would be willing to intervene to protect its own interests including preventing a refugee crisis, securing loose nuclear weapons, and restoring civil order.²⁹ South Koreans in turn warn that in response to U.S.-ROK intervention China might intervene unilaterally based on a historical claim on the northern part of the peninsula.

On the other hand the international community would expect positive Chinese intervention through its participation in UN bodies including the UNSC; the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); and the World Food Programme (WFP). Chinese analysts stress that in the event of instability in the North, China strongly prefers to intervene with formal authorization and through close coordination with the UN.³⁰ China also clearly prefers the insertion of an international peacekeeping force under UN auspices for establishing a representative government that would subsequently decide whether to negotiate reunification with South Korea.³¹

In a regime survival scenario, China would likely support North Korea as a sovereign state while the United States and South Korea push for a reformed and reconstituted state with a new system. Political and legal tools can shape the desired end-state objective through a “tactical approach” of reform based on international norms. In the case of foreign occupation, the main goal would be to establish order to facilitate the establishment of a transitional administration. Various international conventions and principles would provide for legal justifications with UNSC approval.

Phase III. Post-Contingency: Securing Development

The three priority areas in the post-contingency stage are military disarmament, economic reconstruction, and social integration. In this case, recent international post-conflict stabilization efforts may be considered to identify best practices and apply the most relevant lessons to the North Korean case. Robert Zoellick’s priorities for “securing development,” which integrates security and development goals for achieving a sustainable transition from conflict to peace, may also be applied.³² In addition, the Lee administration’s DNO3000 policy may be considered as a broad model for international post-conflict reconstruction efforts in North Korea.

The main security priorities in the post-contingency stage include WMD dismantlement under international regimes; dismantlement of conventional weapons and conversion of military facilities into civilian ones; and the screening and reeducation of military

²⁸ Thompson and Freeman, 2007.

²⁹ Timothy Savage, “Big Brother is Watching: China’s Intentions in the DPRK,” *China Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Autumn 2008), pp. 53-37, http://www.chinasecurity.us/pdfs/CS12_7.pdf.

³⁰ Glaser et al, 2008.

³¹ Snyder and Wit, 2007.

³² Robert Zoellick, “Fragile States: Securing Development,” *Survival*, Vol. 50, Issue 6 (December 2008).

personnel. Disarming and integrating the North Korean army is critical in this phase, when the military assumes supporting roles in broader nation-building efforts. South Korea would require substantial support and participation from the international community to carry out these tasks. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) interventions of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) as part of peacekeeping efforts in Afghanistan may offer lessons for the North Korean case.³³ A major goal of UNDP's Afghanistan program is the transfer of ownership to the government, where DDR-related commissions work closely with UNDP and other international partners to develop a DDR framework based on political consensus as a prerequisite. NGOs and other UN implementing agencies have provided important input into the planning process. The experiences of various existing humanitarian organizations in North Korea would significantly help further understanding of the North Korean context.

Each DDR program clearly varies by context, including the causes of conflict, nature of peace, state capacity, and the security context. But prerequisites for success include strong political will and commitment from all stakeholders and sustained international support, requiring implementation through multiple national and international partnerships. While a primary focus on ex-combatants or former national military forces is necessary in the initial post-conflict phase, support should shift from ex-combatants' specific needs to the needs of broader community to ensure full socio-economic reintegration. Agencies active in North Korea like UNDP can play a key role in mobilizing and managing donor resources, ensuring steady funding throughout the DDR process. For long-term stability, DDR interventions must also develop with complementary economic, political, and social reforms in the context of North Korea's broader recovery and development strategy.

Zoellick emphasizes state legitimacy as the most important priority for long-term economic development, which depends on good governance including delivery of public services with eventual national and local ownership.³⁴ The establishment of a legal framework would ensure public safety and minimize official corruption given the risks of exploitation of state resources. Operational interaction between security and development personnel is critical in the post-contingency phase for coordinating security and development missions based on mutual understandings of interests and capabilities. Norms of institutional coordination such as joint standards of evaluation, division of labor, and sharing of best practices are also important for coordinating all involved actors including states, international institutions, foundations, NGOs, and the private sector.

Post-contingency economic cooperation should focus on long-term development aid for investment in physical and social infrastructure, and engage private and foreign activities

³³ UNDP, *Practice Note: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-combatants*, 2005, http://www.undp.org/cpr/documents/ddr/DDR_Practice_Note_English_PDF.pdf.

³⁴ Zoellick's 10 priorities for securing development in fragile states include: (1) Build state legitimacy, (2) Provide security, (3) Build rule of law and legal order, (4) Bolster local and national ownership, (5) Ensure economic stability, (6) Pay attention to political economy, (7) Crowd in private sector, (8) Coordinate across institutions and actors, (9) Consider regional context, (10) Recognize long-term commitment.

plus a revived state sector. Investment decisionmaking may be delegated to local and national governments through community-driven development programs and national accountability systems with donor support. Raising North Korean understanding of market economics would remain a key long-term goal. In addition to macroeconomic policies, economic stability would require the monitoring of external trends including food and energy prices, and the sequencing of economic reforms with political cycles. The uncertainties of post-conflict investment also make public-private support essential for promoting private sector-led development. While South Korean institutions like Korea Trade Promotion Corporation (KOTRA) and Export-Import Bank (Korea Eximbank) should continue to support North Korea's long-term development, commercial lending will also play an increasingly important role. With normalization of Japan-DPRK relations, Japanese post-colonial payments may serve as a potential source of financing.

Multilateral economic engagement of North Korea is essential given that international financial institutions like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) provide non-politicized technical aid and policy advice.³⁵ New mechanisms such as the proposed Northeast Asian Development Bank should not duplicate existing activities. International advice and lending should be facilitated by agencies already active in North Korea like UNDP, WHO, and UNICEF, and further strengthened by North Korea's entry into agencies like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), ADB, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The World Bank could play a coordinating role as the administrative arm of a multilateral consultative group or repository for a DPRK fund that would initially support technical aid and local institutional capacity-building, and eventually direct lending and investment. New functional working groups could also be created in specific functional areas like the environment, maritime transport, technical trade, road and rail links, and energy which would serve as focal points for integrating aid with increased private sector involvement.

The Six Party Talks could importantly facilitate regional economic cooperation in transport, energy, and transnational issues while bringing inter-Korean reconciliation into a regional framework. As Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland's study indicates, the NEAPSM Working Group could focus on such common economic issues with no explicit focus on North Korea.³⁶ Similarly, the Energy and Economic Working Group could drive new forms of cooperation by shifting its focus from aid to broader economic issues including trade and investment and physical, legal, and financial infrastructural development conducive to deeper integration.

The Lee administration's DNO3000 policy provides a comprehensive framework for North Korea's long-term economic reconstruction, covering five key areas of trade; education; finance; infrastructure; and public services.³⁷ Seoul could promote DNO3000

³⁵ *Future Multilateral Economic Cooperation with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, Conference Report, The Stanley Foundation, June 2005.

³⁶ Haggard and Noland, 2008.

³⁷ Yoon Duk-min, "Vision 3000, Denuclearization and Openness: Tasks and Prospects," *East Asian Review*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Summer 2008).

as the core of an internationally-coordinated North Korea reconstruction program, especially with diplomatic support from six party partners. Pyongyang may also be more receptive to the components of DNO3000 if they are integrated within the six party framework as part of the joint North Korea reconstruction program to follow denuclearization. Bradley Babson offers six strategic objectives as a functional framework for multilateral economic cooperation in North Korea that also integrates six party and broader efforts: implementation of Six Party Talks agreements; transition of the North Korean economy to a market-oriented system; an economic development strategy conducive to sustainable, equitable growth; inter-Korean economic cooperation and progress toward long-term reunification; integration of North Korea in international economic organizations; and Northeast Asian regional economic cooperation.³⁸

Finally, in a regime collapse scenario, it would be necessary to determine what powers a transitional administration would have to govern North Korea until the establishment of a permanent structure. Options for a transitional administration include a South Korean administration; a UN structure; and a transitional administration under UN auspices among others. Internal tensions are likely to emerge in South Korea regarding the question of governing North Korea within its own or international legal system. The United States and Japan would likely support an ROK administration while China and Russia may contest such an arrangement. A UN-led organization structure would likely still rely heavily on South Korean expertise. With the ultimate goal of reunification, South Korea may use the German legal strategy of declaring the existence of a unified sovereign state in a period of divided rule. While the United States would support such an approach, China would oppose the move if it is perceived that Chinese interests might be harmed.

In the long run, international politics might result in contested views on North Korea's post-contingency state. Continued engagement with China on post-contingency North Korea is important for transforming the six party framework into a broader regional security forum, establishing a Korean peace regime, and strengthening the U.S.-ROK alliance. China has positively contributed to Korean peninsula issues by hosting Six Party Talks on North Korean denuclearization and hosting the earlier Four Party Talks on replacing the Korean War Armistice with a peace agreement, but has its own reservations about the evolution of the broader regional security architecture. Both China and South Korea share an immediate interest in seeing gradual rather than sudden change in North Korea given significant potential burdens on both economies, but fundamentally diverge on the issue of unification and a long-term vision for the Korean peninsula.³⁹ While South Korea sees unification as the ultimate end-state, China fears whether a reunified Korea might make territorial claims on the Chinese Northeast or align strategically with the United States and Japan as part of regional efforts to contain China. Many observers now question Chinese support of unification given that current relations with Korea puts China in its best position, with the South driving economic growth and the North serving

³⁸ Bradley O. Babson, "Future Multilateral Economic Cooperation with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: An Exploration of Issues and Options," Conference Paper, The Stanley Foundation, June 2005.

³⁹ Savage, 2008.

as a buffer zone against the U.S. alliance system.⁴⁰ Chinese analysts, however, dismiss this notion, citing improved U.S.-China relations and advances in military technology.

Efforts to strengthen the U.S.-ROK alliance even after unification or elimination of the North Korea threat, or to develop the U.S. alliance network into a region-wide security mechanism, would clearly raise Chinese concerns. As Wu Xinbo of Fudan University's Center for American Studies argues, China opposes a regional security arrangement based on "hegemonic stability" of U.S.-led bilateral alliances.⁴¹ At the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on May 2009, Deputy Chief of the PLA General Staff Ma Xiaotian stressed that "China opposes the enlargement of the existing bilateral military alliance in Asia Pacific which were left over from the Cold War."⁴² This view echoed the statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman a year earlier that "the U.S.-ROK military alliance is something leftover from the history... The Cold War mentality of "military alliance" would not be valid in viewing, measuring and handling the current global or regional security issues."⁴³

At his summit meeting with President Obama in June 2009, President Lee repeatedly stressed the importance of the U.S.-ROK alliance in dealing with North Korea. The Lee administration's renewed efforts to strengthen the U.S.-ROK alliance and trilateral coordination with Japan, especially on North Korean issues, would have to take into account Chinese security perceptions. It is important for China and South Korea to build mutual trust and confidence at an early stage through dialogue to avoid any escalation of traditional security differences that may resurface in the long run. As Wu also suggests, China may accept a strengthened U.S. alliance structure in Asia as long as it does not undermine Chinese interests and contributes to regional stability, in turn reassuring others of Chinese intentions. Moreover, current South Korean, U.S., and Chinese interests converge on North Korea issues of promoting denuclearization and reform and development in the North. Such possibilities for managing differences highlight the strong need for early dialogue among the three parties on North Korea's future.

U.S.-ROK Priorities

Based on the prospects for U.S.-ROK cooperation on North Korea contingency planning in each phase of contingency and functional area of cooperation, it is possible to identify four immediate priorities for the United States and South Korea including lead agencies and mechanisms for operationalizing cooperation:

⁴⁰ "China debates its bond with North Korea," *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 2009.

⁴¹ Wu Xinbo, "U.S. Security Policy in Asia: Implications for China-U.S. Relations," The Brookings Institution, September 2000, http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2000/09northeastasia_xinbo.aspx.

⁴² Ma Xiaotian, "Promote Security Cooperation for a Harmonious Asia-Pacific Region," The 8th IISS Asia Security Summit, The Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore, May 30, 2009, <http://www.iiss.org/conferences/the-shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2009/plenary-session-speeches-2009/second-plenary-session/lieutenant-general-ma-xiaotian/>.

⁴³ Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang's Regular Press Conference on May 27, 2008, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t459519.htm>.

1. Whole-of-government approach. Both sides must take a whole-of-government approach that integrates non-military aspects of contingency planning to develop a political rather than military framework for cooperation. Implementation of this comprehensive plan requires effective interagency coordination within the Seoul and Washington governments that will become increasingly important at each phase of contingency. Intelligence cooperation in North Korea must be strengthened to accurately assess the North's internal situation given the inherent difficulty of distinguishing military and non-military indicators of instability.

2. Consensus on end-state. The United States and South Korea must build consensus on the end-state of contingency both internally and bilaterally based on a common vision for the future of Korea. This mutual agenda can determine a set of common principles for responding to contingency, such as an understanding of the U.S.-ROK alliance as the lead mechanism; self-determination, prohibiting any external intervention in North Korea without South Korean consent; consultation with other major stakeholders including China, Japan, and Russia; and endorsement and cooperation from major international organizations. Further raising debate are divergent conceptions of North Korea's status at the mid-point to the end-state, including in a reunification scenario. Such differences underline the importance of early consensus-building on the long-term process of achieving mutual end-state objectives.

3. Sequenced cooperation. The United States and South Korea must establish a clear understanding of the appropriate form and sequencing of cooperation, identifying priority areas of cooperation, sequencing responses, and managing multiple scenarios. The pre-contingency phase presents key challenges of diplomatic coordination including on the prevention of third party intervention in North Korea, and military preparedness to meet North Korean military provocations or unintentional conflict, with the primary focus on the security of South Korea. Priorities in the contingency phase include stabilization in North Korea through careful coordination of military and humanitarian operations based on a common political response as a prerequisite, and stabilization in South Korea through emergency measures to maintain political, economic, social, and psychological order. The main focus of the post-contingency phase would be on securing North Korea's long-term economic development in close collaboration with all stakeholders and across all sectors, with international donors and the private sector playing a key role.

4. Coordination with China. The United States and South Korea must coordinate with China based on mutual understandings of China's response to U.S.-ROK planning and assessment of the North Korean situation. Existing bilateral channels may serve as a starting point. The China-ROK strategic cooperative dialogue launched in 2008 could include discussion of rules and principles for responding to North Korean contingencies such as China's "Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" to prevent any abrupt Chinese intervention that is feared by South Korea, in addition to practical steps such as military hotlines that remain a weak spot in China-ROK military cooperation. As an initial confidence-building measure South Korea could also begin a new track 1.5 or 2 dialogue with China on DPRK contingency in close coordination with the United States and in parallel with a similar U.S.-China dialogue. This form of dialogue may eventually evolve

into a track 1 U.S.-China-ROK trilateral, with a focus on discreet military talks. In addition, Seoul may gain from U.S. access to Chinese thinking through existing U.S.-China mechanisms for possible DPRK information-sharing such as the Senior Dialogue, Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED), and bilateral summits, although most North Korea-related discussion at these forums have been in the context of the Six Party Talks.

China must be included in U.S.-ROK planning if China is to be reassured that any future scenario will not adversely affect Chinese interests. Engaging China on North Korea contingency planning will require engaging both the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and PLA; recent PLA preparations including increased border security, military exercises, and intelligence collection, have not been accompanied by any corresponding political or diplomatic planning by the civilian leadership. There has been no Chinese military coordination with the United States and South Korea despite China's awareness of potential needs such as deconfliction with U.S. Forces Korea (USFK). Other, smaller steps to engage China may include expanding Korea personnel in the Beijing embassy or expanding Chinese ties with USFK through the Seoul embassy; inviting the PLA to Seoul for joint ROK/Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS)-PLA consultations; sending a U.S. military delegation including USFK to Beijing; including a military component to a five party session of Six Party Talks; and informal discussions on the sidelines of the Six Party Talks.

To date there has been no U.S.-China-ROK discussion at any level on managing instability in North Korea. Beijing reportedly rebuffed Bush administration attempts to discuss contingency planning based on its principle of noninterference and out of fear of the potential response from North Korea.⁴⁴ The difficulties of initiating dialogue between China, South Korea, and the United States on managing instability in North Korea suggest the need for a quiet but clear agreement on a common approach focusing on technical aspects of managing a potential crisis that would lead to improved understandings while avoiding political issues of intervention.⁴⁵ Rather than high-level discussion, practical coordination on such areas as humanitarian operations may be more productive in the initial stage. Although China remains reluctant to openly discuss the future of North Korea, it is possible to address the sources of mutual distrust as part of initial confidence-building efforts. For example, six party efforts toward replacing the 1953 Armistice with a new peace regime may present an opportunity for South Korea and China to address the question of restructuring the U.S.-ROK alliance in a way that addresses ROK security concerns while alleviating Chinese fears of encirclement.⁴⁶

Potential Conflict Points

In carrying out the priority tasks, it is necessary to address four interrelated conflict points that may pose immediate challenges to cooperation:

⁴⁴ Solomon and Leow, 2008.

⁴⁵ Finnegan, "What Now? The Case for U.S.-ROK-PRC Coordination on North Korea," PacNet No. 48, Pacific Forum CSIS, September 11, 2008.

⁴⁶ Savage, 2008.

1. Track I vs. Track II diplomacy. Bringing North Korea contingency planning on the high-level agenda in Washington remains a major challenge, as a result of which the United States lacks a formal policy context for discussing the issue. This problem further exacerbates the difficulty of formalizing any bilateral or multilateral contingency plan for North Korea. Including contingency planning as part of Washington's overall DPRK policy beyond the Six Party Talks may be one way to move the issue forward.

For U.S.-ROK diplomatic coordination, initial track 1.5 consultations may be preferred to official dialogue. One major possibility is the creation of a consortium of organizations backed by high-level funding and guidance, comprised of such members as the Institute for Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS) under the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT), the Korea Institute of National Unification (KINU), and Korea Institute for Defense Analyses (KIDA), each of which represent different specializations, and U.S. quasi-government counterparts such as the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) and National Defense University (NDU). However, it is uncertain to what extent such an arrangement may shape U.S. or ROK policymaking as some of these organizations are already highly politicized. Another option would be to follow the Chinese example of combining top-down with bottom-up engagement.

2. Bilateral vs. multilateral engagement. While the U.S.-ROK alliance would lead coordination on North Korea's future, coordination with other needed bilateral and multilateral efforts presents major challenges given competing interests and potential misperceptions. For example, it is important to raise North Korea higher on the U.S.-China agenda, but any U.S.-China dialogue on North Korea's future that excludes South Korea would heighten South Korean fears of strategic isolation especially at a time of stalled inter-Korean relations and renewed efforts in U.S.-DPRK dialogue. Japanese concerns may be best addressed through quiet U.S. bilateral diplomacy, using the U.S.-Japan alliance as a channel for Japan to shape the situation rather than seeking direct Japanese involvement in discussions on contingency planning.⁴⁷ China, on the other hand, would prefer addressing issues related to North Korea in a multilateral context and may feel threatened by any strengthened U.S. alliance arrangements, U.S.-ROK-Japan cooperation on North Korea in particular. Another clear challenge is the need to conduct dialogue on the possibility of regime collapse in North Korea without the participation of Pyongyang as a dialogue partner. The failure to effectively align U.S. bilateral and multilateral efforts on planning for instability in North Korea may lead to inconsistent and conflicting approaches as well as duplication of activities.

3. U.S.-China-ROK coordination. Although the United States, China, and South Korea share a strong interest in developing mutual understandings on responding to North Korea, some gaps in priorities suggest considerable points of potential conflict in U.S.-China-ROK coordination in a crisis scenario.⁴⁸ Seoul primarily wants to avoid sudden regime collapse in the North, but is also cautious to limit direct intervention by China and the United States despite South Korea's lack of capacity to solely manage large-scale

⁴⁷ Finnegan, 2008.

⁴⁸ Finnegan, 2008.

North Korean instability. The United States would support South Korean efforts in crisis management to prevent any spillover effects that would draw U.S. military intervention, but the U.S. priority concern would lie in addressing a potential “loose nukes” scenario. China would want to avoid the economic and regional security implications of instability in North Korea but also has a strategic interest in restricting U.S.-led intervention. From a long-term perspective, Seoul also seeks a policy package that integrates nuclear policy, engagement policy, and unification policy into a coordinated strategy toward North Korea. Such differences highlight the urgent need for effective policy coordination among the three parties on managing instability in North Korea, without which simultaneous interventions in the event of crisis could lead to direct military conflict between the three military forces.⁴⁹

A fundamental area of conflict is in long-term visions for the future of Korea. The immediate challenge of denuclearization has tended to hamper any U.S.-China discussion on vision-setting, reflecting the difficulty of thinking long-term about Korean security without first resolving the nuclear issue.⁵⁰ One functional area of potential U.S.-China-ROK conflict is humanitarian cooperation. The political sensitivities surrounding the China-DPRK relationship suggest that Beijing will seek to restrict direct foreign intervention in a border crisis, and the issue of North Korean refugees in particular may constrain China’s cooperation with the international community and willingness to share information.⁵¹ China’s approach to Sichuan earthquake relief efforts in April 2008 indicated continued Chinese wariness toward foreign intervention in national crises.

4. Humanitarian vs. political responses. The need to depoliticize humanitarian aid has proven especially challenging in North Korea given close linkages to political issues and North Korean suspicion toward any external intervention. Furthering this difficulty is the lack of consensus on how to define the humanitarian crisis given the tendency of governments to resist intervention even under the newly-emerging concept of the Responsibility To Protect. Several recent cases may provide new potential references regarding the provision of foreign assistance to conflict or disaster-affected countries.⁵² The Somali case involves a combination of large-scale emergency, violence, and internal chaos that may be distinguished from other complex crises like Afghanistan. Israel denies that military action is causing a crisis in Gaza despite the disruption of food supplies, medical care, and access to clean water, while the Burmese government denies the existence of chronic emergency and initially rejected external relief aid after the cyclone disaster in May 2008. The Zimbabwe government has also resisted aid while protecting its internal situation from outside forces perceived to be seeking to overthrow the ruling party. International experience in each of these cases carries potential application to North Korea depending on how North Korean instability might unfold. A more clear and consistent definition of humanitarian crises might encourage greater

⁴⁹ Snyder and Wit, 2007.

⁵⁰ Bonnie Glaser and Chietigh Bakpae, “Inside North Korea: A Joint U.S.-China Dialogue,” USIP Briefing, January 2007, <http://www.usip.org/resources/inside-north-korea-joint-us-chinese-dialogue>.

⁵¹ Thompson and Freeman, 2009.

⁵² Joel Charny, “The Rhetoric of a “Humanitarian Crisis,”” *Reuters*, January 8, 2009.

consistency in the international response while easing suspicions of political motivations to undermine state authority.

Coordinating U.S.-ROK Contingency Planning on North Korea

Contingency planning on North Korea is a long-term process that should evolve from a defensive to proactive approach based on a comprehensive, coordinated strategy and common goal. In the early phase, North Korea contingency planning could be developed within existing mechanisms on the DOD and policy side. There should be vice foreign ministerial and especially National Security Council (NSC) dialogues for initial informal discussions. Interagency coordination within U.S. and ROK governments is most difficult and important for managing multiple issues and actors during the mid-phase of contingency. In the post-contingency phase, the international community plays a key role in legitimizing the consequences of intervention, with U.S.-ROK high-level cooperation critical for facilitating pre-consultations on who leads potential UN resolutions.

North Korea contingency planning is a current priority area of U.S.-ROK cooperation given frozen inter-Korean relations, China's rise, and the stalled six party nuclear negotiations, as well as the continued tendency of North Korea-related issues to become the central focus of regional power politics. The outcome of any scenario in North Korea will depend in the initial stage on the unfolding of internal power dynamics rather than the actions of external powers. In light of Pyongyang's current provocations and the likely failure of sanctions or direct engagement, Andrei Lankov has further argued for "subversive engagement" to transform North Korean society through comprehensive cultural, educational, and economic exchange.⁵³ On the other hand, South Korean policymakers appear more worried about how other parties will respond to a North Korean crisis rather than the situation in the North itself. However, a coordinated international response led by the United States and South Korea would importantly contain the potential costs of North Korea's leadership succession on peninsular and regional stability. Effective international cooperation on instability in North Korea could positively shape the resolution of the nuclear crisis and other broader regional security concerns.

⁵³ Andrei Lankov, "The North Korean Paradox and the Subversive Truth," *Asian Outlook*, March 3, 2009, http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.29483/pub_detail.asp.

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