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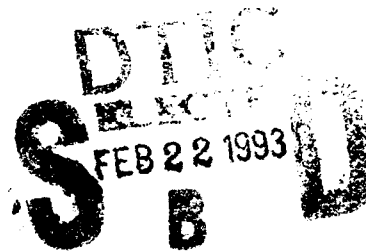
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A RAND NOTE

Background and Options for Nuclear  
Arms Control on the Korean Peninsula

Kongdan Oh



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## **A RAND NOTE**

**N-3475-USDP**

### **Background and Options for Nuclear Arms Control on the Korean Peninsula**

**Kongdan Oh**

**Prepared for the  
Assistant Secretary of Defense  
(International Security Affairs),  
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense  
for Policy**

**RAND**

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## PREFACE

The research for this Note was undertaken for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (East Asia and Pacific Affairs) within the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs). The research was part of a larger effort, led by James Winnefeld and Jonathan Pollack at RAND, to identify and assess a range of U.S. force posture options in Northeast Asia in the first decade of the 21st century. The study was undertaken within the International Security and Defense Strategy Program of RAND's National Defense Research Institute (NDRI), a federally funded research and development center supported by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff. Comments on this Note should be directed to the author or to the program director, Dr. Charles Kelley.

This research has been conducted specifically to examine the prospects for a nuclear-free Korea. The research objectives are to provide a survey of issues related to nuclear arms control on the Korean peninsula and to examine several options for nuclear arms reduction that might be exercised by the United States or its allies. The research is based primarily on current news and journal articles (up to February 1992), interpreted in the light of the past 40 years of North-South Korean relations. The Note is a regional analysis rather than a theoretical arms-control analysis.

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## SUMMARY

Korean affairs have unfolded rapidly in the past few years. The communist bloc has disintegrated, leaving North Korea with few supporters. South and North Korea have joined the United Nations and have signed two potentially significant inter-Korean agreements: the Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression and Exchanges and Cooperation; and the Joint Declaration for a Non-Nuclear Korean Peninsula. President Bush has ordered the worldwide withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons, and South Korea's President Roh Tae Woo has subsequently declared that his nation is free of nuclear weapons. On January 30, 1992, North Korea belatedly signed the Nuclear Safeguards Accord (NSA) of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), thereby obligating itself to undergo IAEA inspections of its nuclear facilities.

These and other changes warrant careful consideration, with North Korea's apparent pursuit of nuclear weapons development an ominous countertrend to the more positive developments in other areas. By signing the NSA, the North has opened the way for IAEA inspection of its nuclear facilities. But this is only the beginning of the end of a nuclear Korea (assuming that the North does in fact have such a program). The North Koreans must first ratify the NSA, then cooperate fully in the implementation of the inspections, and finally dismantle any nuclear fuel reprocessing or uranium enrichment facilities that they may have constructed. At every step there is the possibility of delay and deception. For this reason, the nuclear question in Korea remains very much alive.

Political and security trends have improved the prospects for meaningful arms control on the Korean peninsula. As far back as 1986, President Mikhail Gorbachev proposed arms reductions in Asia. Although his proposal was not implemented, the recent breakup of the Soviet Union downgrades Russia or the new Commonwealth of Independent States as a potential military threat to Asia. China has been preoccupied with domestic affairs and has developed a significant trading relationship with South Korea, so it is unlikely that Beijing would support any North Korean aggression (nuclear or conventional) against South Korea. Japan does not constitute a nuclear threat to the region, and it has recently declared that denuclearization of North Korea is a precondition for its establishing diplomatic relations with Pyongyang. The United States is involved in long-term nuclear and conventional arms reduction, in response to fiscal constraints and to the perception of a greatly reduced threat from the former Soviet Union.

South and North Korea have been trading arms-control suggestions for many years, but the animosity and suspicion that separate the two sides have blocked any meaningful progress. And within South Korea, the wisdom of arms reduction is still being debated. Indeed, the nuclear question may prove to be more than simply one aspect of a hoped-for mutual North-South arms reduction. North Korea perceives itself to be surrounded by actual and potential enemies, of which South Korea is only one—and not necessarily the most threatening one. In this larger context, the denuclearization of Korea is an issue involving the threat capabilities and the perceptions of all the nations that have influence in the Northeast Asian region.

The original version of this Note, written less than a year ago, presented four possible options for making both North and South Korea nuclear free. They are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive. Events have overtaken the original proposals. The first option is unilateral withdrawal of any U.S. nuclear weapons that may have been based in South Korea. President Roh Tae Woo has now declared that there are no nuclear weapons in South Korea. Such a withdrawal at the very least should constitute a significant confidence-building measure in any future nuclear arms negotiations with North Korea, but it provides no guarantee that Pyongyang will respond positively by allowing meaningful IAEA inspection of its facilities.

The second option would link the withdrawal of a U.S. nuclear weapons capability from South Korea with North Korean agreement to inspection of its territory. But after President Bush's announcement of the worldwide withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons, Pyongyang professed not to be impressed, and insisted that the U.S. strategic nuclear umbrella be removed from South Korea, thus suggesting another form of nuclear linkage option.

The third option is political-economic linkage; that is, an offer to trade North Korean consent to intrusive inspection arrangements for economic or diplomatic inducements from the United States, Japan, and other nations—or to threaten diplomatic or economic sanctions if the North refuses to allow inspections.

The fourth option is to attack suspected North Korean nuclear facilities. This option has at least one precedent (the 1981 Israeli strike on Iraq's Osirak reactor), and it has been mentioned in both Washington and Seoul.

A course of unilateral withdrawal, serving as a confidence-building measure, followed by a political-economic linkage option has much to recommend it. President Bush's withdrawal announcement laid the groundwork for unilateral withdrawal. North Korea has gone so far as to sign the Nuclear Safeguards Accord, but has not yet indicated when it will

permit IAEA inspections. It has, however, shown interest in establishing diplomatic and economic relations with Japan, which could provide the key to the use of political-economic linkage.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author's foremost thanks go to RAND colleagues James Winnefeld and Jonathan Pollack, who asked me to examine the Korean nuclear-free issue and who shared their wisdom and advice throughout the course of this research. Both of them read several versions of this document and added valuable suggestions. I am also indebted to James Wendt, who accompanied me on a field trip to Korea and with enthusiasm and sincerity studied how the Koreans think and feel about nuclear issues. He also reviewed a working draft of this Note and provided numerous suggestions for its improvement. Geni Coughlan and Debbi Putz ably typed several versions of the Note and provided cheerful support in the office.

Outside of RAND, the author benefited from discussions with Ralph Hassig, a social psychologist and amateur Korea observer, whose views on the attitudes of South and North Koreans provided a valuable perspective.

Notwithstanding the assistance rendered by those named above, the final content of this Note remains the sole responsibility of the author.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Note is part of a broader effort to analyze alternative U.S. force postures around the Pacific Basin in the period 2000 to 2010. Its specific task is to consider North and South Korean attitudes toward nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula and to outline some alternative nuclear arms-control regimes that might frame future negotiations.

In South Korea, the concept of a nuclear-free Korea has recently received intense scrutiny. There are several reasons for this interest: (1) the re-emergence of the Korean unification question, stimulated by the German unification of 1990; (2) the perception of the possibility of tension and arms reduction on the Korean peninsula as a result of changes in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; (3) concern about North Korea's apparent efforts to develop nuclear weapons; and (4) dissatisfaction (until recently) among many South Koreans with the assumed presence of nuclear weapons in their country and with the traditional U.S. policy of NCND (neither confirmation nor denial) with regard to these weapons.

North Korea has been advocating a denuclearization of the peninsula for some years, and it denies reports that it has either the intention or the capability to develop nuclear weapons. Pyongyang has not, however, opened its nuclear facilities to international inspections, despite widespread pressure to do so.

In terms of broader arms reduction in the region, one initial stimulus was Mikhail Gorbachev's 1988 Krasnoyarsk speech, which prompted many in South Korea to believe that serious arms-reduction negotiations with North Korea were possible. The warming relations between South Korea and both the former Soviets and the Chinese have reduced South Korean threat perceptions, because without continued support from its communist neighbors, Pyongyang's own threat to South Korea diminishes. South and North Korea are also beginning a dialogue with each other, and this further reduces threat perceptions in the South.

The United States has planned a phased, partial troop withdrawal from the South (in consultation with the South Korean government), but it has not entered into negotiations with North Korea about a more general arms reduction. The Russians are interested in arms reduction on the Korean peninsula, but they have not offered any concrete plans. Neither the Japanese nor the Chinese have pushed arms reduction, although both have called for measures to reduce political and military tensions on the peninsula.

North Korea has made a number of radical proposals, including an offer to reduce its troop levels to 100,000 if South Korea reciprocates. But South Korean suspicion of the North's intentions has so far blocked any serious arms-reduction negotiations. As long as Kim Il Sung remains in power in the North, arms reduction is likely to be a very slow and cautious process.

## 2. NORTH-SOUTH ARMS-REDUCTION PROPOSALS

Arms reduction, including the elimination of nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula, has become a topic for serious debate in South Korea. Korean decisionmakers and professionals who participate in the process share a consensus: arms control with North Korea should be promoted slowly but steadily, without losing sight of the fact that North Korea is a dangerous and unpredictable state.

Popular opinion is divided on this issue. Some South Koreans demand a speedy reduction in arms and brush aside possible implementation problems. Others oppose arms reduction (at least for now), because they do not trust North Korea. There are still others who support the objective of arms reduction but recognize the necessity of proceeding slowly and with great care. Such is the range of opinion on this important topic, and the mass media play up the antagonism between the contending positions. The general sentiment among the politically attentive segments of the population, however, is that the time has come to engage in arms control and tension reduction, although there are many different opinions on how it should be done.

To analyze the prospects for a nuclear-free Korea, four papers reflecting the spectrum of opinion on this issue will be examined. Three of these papers (by Tal-kon Lee, Kwan-ch'i Oh, and Hang-so Lee) were written as part of a project report for South Korea's National Unification Board. All four authors are leading professionals in defense and arms control, and their studies cover a broad range of arms-control literature as well as empirical data.<sup>1</sup>

The articles by the two Lees are theoretical, and take a middle-of-the-road stance. They use the literature of European arms control to discuss tension-reduction options. Oh and Chi are better acquainted with the military situation of the two Koreas, and they deal with the more operational details of arms control. Oh tends to defend the status quo and advocates continuing military modernization by the South Korean government, while Chi argues that drastic reductions in manpower are now possible.

<sup>1</sup>The authors and papers are as follows: Tal-kon Lee, "Kunch'uk iron-e ipgak-han Nam Pukhan kunch'uk hyopsong taean yong'u" [Alternatives for the Arms Control Negotiation in Korea], *The Korean Journal of Unification Affairs*, Spring 1989, pp. 103-192. Kwan-ch'i Oh, "Nam Pukhan kunsaryok kyunhyongron-e taehan koch'al" [An Assessment of the Military Balance on the Korean Peninsula], *The Korean Journal of Unification Affairs*, Spring 1989, pp. 37-74. Hang-so Lee, "Nam Pukhan kunbi t'ongje pang'an pigyo" [A Comparison of North-South Korean Approaches toward Arms Control], *The Korean Journal of Unification Affairs*, Winter 1990, pp. 59-81. Man-won Chi, "North and South Korea Can Reduce Their Armies to 300,000 Men Each," *Wolgan Chosun*, July 1990, pp. 160-169 (in Korean). Also cited in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report, East Asia* (hereafter, FBIS-EAS), July 12, 1990, pp. 25-31.

All the authors except Oh agree that tension and arms reduction in Korea is timely and historically inevitable, and that developments on the Korean peninsula and in the international environment are conducive to this goal. They acknowledge that there are numerous tangible and psychological barriers to negotiation between the two Koreas, but believe that the resolve to negotiate is growing stronger in both North and South. They also agree that Seoul must take the initiative in arms control by patient persuasion.

These three authors also agree on several practical prescriptions for tension reduction and arms control. First, U.S. troop withdrawals should be used as a bargaining chip to induce Pyongyang to participate in arms-reduction agreements. Second, a nuclear-free Korea cannot be considered as an independent issue, separate from overall arms control. Third, North Korean suggestions for reducing military manpower to the 300,000 level (as a first step) must be considered a serious offer prompted by North Korea's economic needs. Fourth, renouncing the use of chemical and biological weapons is an important preliminary step to arms reduction. And fifth, while the two Koreas will be the main actors in arms control in Korea, their neighbors and the United States will play an important role in endorsing and guaranteeing arms-control agreements.

On some important points the four authors disagree. Oh insists that the current desire of South Koreans to promote arms control with the North is dangerous and self-deceiving in terms of national security. He believes that North Korea has not changed its longstanding desire to achieve unification by force and that the overall military balance strongly favors the North. In his opinion, the popular belief that an equilibrium has been achieved imperils the South's security.

The South Korean government's approach to arms reduction is consistent with its overall negotiating approach to North Korea: a gradual, three-stage set of confidence-building measures (CBMs), beginning with political consultations, then military agreements, and finally actual arms reduction. This follows the sequence of events that led to arms reduction in Europe, where systems and institutions for political and military confidence building preceded actual reduction agreements.

North Korea advocates an all-at-once approach, in which force reductions (ultimately to 100,000 soldiers on each side) are undertaken simultaneously with other political and military negotiations.<sup>2</sup> In theory, the North Koreans present a four-stage approach: (1) CBMs (discussed below), (2) arms reduction, (3) removal of foreign troops, and (4) signing

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<sup>2</sup>Ideas and approaches have been expressed by both Seoul and Pyongyang since 1989, but the details have been clarified through six prime ministers' summits from September 1990 to February 1992.

of a nonaggression pact with South Korea. But in actual negotiations these issues are not presented in any particular order, giving the impression either that the North is undecided about its next move or that it is not serious about arms reduction.

In short, Seoul emphasizes process, while Pyongyang is concerned with immediate results. Seoul attributes the strain between the two Koreas to mutual distrust. Pyongyang argues that the division of Korea, imposed (it claims) by the United States and maintained by the U.S. troop presence, is the source of the strain, and that once the country is "reunited" in a two-system, two-government confederacy, all problems can be resolved.

### **POLITICAL CBMs**

Seoul has suggested a set of three political CBMs. First, the North and South governments must recognize each other's sovereignty and legitimacy, and cease mutual defamations and accusations. Second, publications and other communication media of each side must be made available to the people of the other side. Third, permanent liaison offices should be opened in Seoul and Pyongyang to promote communication and strengthen the North-South relationship.<sup>3</sup>

Pyongyang has offered a CBM plan specifically targeted at changes in South Korea: (1) cease mutual defamation; (2) guarantee the free dissemination of publications and ideas within each country; (3) abolish South Korea's National Security Law, which limits the contacts that the South's citizens may have with the North; (4) destroy the cement wall (which is in fact a series of tank barricades) that runs along the south side of the DMZ; (5) allow "free exchanges of visits" for citizens; and (6) participate in international forums (specifically the United Nations) as one nation.<sup>4</sup>

### **MILITARY CBMs**

Seoul has suggested five military CBMs: (1) exchanges and visits of military personnel; (2) exchanges of relevant military information; (3) a 45-day notice of the movement of troops or exercises involving units of brigade size or larger, as well as invitations to the other side to observe military exercises; (4) establishment of a hot line between the two defense ministries; and (5) effective demilitarization of the DMZ, which at present is heavily fortified.

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<sup>3</sup>*Nam-Puk Tachwa* [South-North Dialogue] (Seoul: Bureau for South-North Dialogue, National Unification Board, December 1990), pp. 7-182. Also, *Continuing the Dialogue: The Third Round of South-North Korean High-Level Talks* (Seoul: Korean Overseas Information Service, December 1990), pp. 5-26.

<sup>4</sup>*Nam-Puk Tachwa*, pp. 7-182; *Continuing the Dialogue*, pp. 5-26.

Pyongyang offers a similar set of suggestions, in the form of three broad proposals and a number of subproposals.<sup>5</sup> The broad proposals are first, to forbid joint military exercises and training with foreign troops; second, to turn the DMZ into a peace zone; and third, to establish safety measures to prevent accidents.

Under the first proposal, the North suggests the following measures: (1) cease joint military exercises and training with foreign forces; (2) forbid military training and exercises of division size or larger; (3) forbid military exercises in the vicinity of the DMZ; (4) forbid military exercises of foreign troops within Korea; and (5) provide advance notice of all military exercises.

Under the second proposal: (1) withdraw all military personnel and equipment from the DMZ; (2) dismantle all military facilities in the DMZ; and (3) use the DMZ for peaceful purposes and open it to civilians.

Under the third proposal: (1) establish hotlines between high government authorities on the two sides; and (2) prevent all military challenges and violations along the DMZ.

Except for Pyongyang's repeated emphasis on the elimination of joint military exercises with foreign (i.e., American) troops, these proposals are similar to the South's. After Pyongyang signed a reconciliation and nonaggression agreement, and a nonnuclear agreement, with Seoul in December 1991, Seoul (in consultation with Washington) announced the cancellation of the Team Spirit exercises for 1992. At least in its public response to the cancellation, North Korea was not impressed. Three days after the announcement, Pyongyang's *Nodong Sinmun* published a signed article that said, in part,

The United States must conclude a peace agreement with us, promptly take a step to withdraw its forces from South Korea and no longer interfere in the reunification affair of Korea. And it must stop the "Team Spirit" joint military exercises, a nuclear attack game against the North, not only this year but for good and all, and also discontinue all other military exercises such as "Rimpac" and "Eagle."<sup>6</sup>

Beginning with the first of the high-level talks with Seoul in September 1990, Pyongyang insisted that the two sides sign a nonaggression declaration as a military CBM. Seoul wanted such a declaration to be made only after political CBMs had been completed. Part of Seoul's suspicion of a nonaggression declaration is based on Pyongyang's record of aggression and violations of the Armistice Agreement. Another part arises from Seoul's

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<sup>5</sup>*Nam-Puk Taehwa*, pp. 7-182; *Continuing the Dialogue*, pp. 5-26.

<sup>6</sup>*Nodong Sinmun*, as reported by KCNA radio, January 10, 1992; cited in FBIS-EAS, January 10, 1992, p. 15.

perception that Pyongyang would use such an agreement to push for the removal of the U.S. forces in South Korea, which are there principally to deter North Korean aggression. At the fifth round of high-level talks in December 1991, the two premiers signed a four-chapter pact entitled "Agreement Concerning Reconciliation, Nonaggression and Exchanges and Cooperation Between the South and the North." It includes many of the proposals that have been advocated by both sides. By signing, Seoul acceded to the North Korean request for a nonaggression pledge. Pyongyang's concession was to implicitly recognize the legitimacy of the South Korean government and agree to a series of cooperative measures that, if fully implemented, would dramatically open up North Korean society.

There are six nonaggression articles in the agreement:<sup>7</sup>

- (1) Neither side shall make armed aggression against the other.
- (2) Disputes shall be decided peacefully by dialogue and negotiation.
- (3) Both sides shall respect the border along the demilitarized line as defined in the 1953 Military Armistice Agreement (which the South did not sign).
- (4) A joint committee shall be established to carry out steps "to build military confidence and realize arms reductions, including the mutual notification and control of major movements of military units and major military exercises, the peaceful utilization of the Demilitarized Zone, exchanges of military personnel and information, phased reductions in armaments including the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and surprise attack capabilities, and verifications thereof."
- (5) A telephone hot line shall be set up between the military authorities of the two sides.
- (6) A military subcommittee will be set up within the framework of the ongoing South-North high-level talks to discuss the implementation of these articles.

In the reconciliation articles the two Koreas promise to respect each other's political system, not to interfere in each other's internal affairs, and neither slander nor in any manner subvert each other. The cooperation articles pledge North and South to carry out exchanges in many fields, guarantee residents free inter-Korean travel and contact, and reconnect transportation and communication links. The agreement "entered into force" at the sixth round of high-level talks in February 1992.

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<sup>7</sup>For an English-language translation by the South Koreans (from which the following quotation is taken), see *Vantage Point*, December 1991, pp. 33-35. A similar North Korean translation into English can be found in *The Pyongyang Times*, December 14, 1991, pp. 2-3.



## STEPS TOWARD ARMS REDUCTION

Seoul has proposed five arms-reduction principles: (1) transform offensive forces into defensive forces, and reduce the size of these forces drastically; (2) seek a balance of power, i.e., equal number and quality of forces; (3) concomitantly reduce the size of reserve forces; (4) establish a military inspection team and a permanent military observer team; and (5) decide on an optimum force level necessary for the defense of a unified Korea.

The North Korean principles are more specific: (1) reduce military manpower within three to four years from their present levels (estimated by foreign experts to be 650,000 in the South and one million plus in the North) to 100,000 per side; (2) dissolve all civilian military organizations; (3) stop upgrading the quality of military equipment; (4) remove the U.S. forces from Korea; (5) denuclearize the Korean peninsula; and (6) organize a joint North-South military committee for the purpose of observation and verification.<sup>8</sup>

Once the joint military committee has been formed, as specified in the reconciliation and nonaggression agreement, presumably it will begin to discuss these more specific arms-reduction proposals. Although the proposals of the two sides are similar in some respects, agreeing to specific numbers and to a method of verification is likely to be a long-term process.

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<sup>8</sup>*Nam-Puk Taehwa*, pp. 7-182; *Continuing the Dialogue*, pp. 5-26.

### 3. REGIONAL INFLUENCES ON ARMS-CONTROL PROSPECTS

Despite the dynamism of the Asia Pacific region, the legacy of the Cold War persists very powerfully on the Korean peninsula. Nonetheless, some changes are taking place. In Korea *nuclear* arms reduction is but one aspect of the larger agenda of arms control, which involves the policies and actions of numerous states in addition to the Koreans, in particular the former Soviet Union, China, Japan, and the United States. This section will explore this broader topic of arms reduction as background, before we turn to specific issues of nuclear arms control.

#### THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

The foundation of the former Soviet Union's peace initiatives in the Asia Pacific region was first laid in Gorbachev's speech at Vladivostok in July 1986 and expanded in his September 1988 speech at Krasnoyarsk. The latter speech did not deal exclusively with the Korean situation, but it did provide a basis for arms reduction in Korea.<sup>1</sup> Gorbachev made three important suggestions with regard to Northeast Asia: First, he said the Soviet Union would not increase the size of its nuclear arsenal in the region. Second, he suggested that in order to reduce tension, all nations in the region should freeze air and naval power at current levels, and a multiparty conference on arms control should be held. Third, he proposed developing special safeguards to prevent future crises and accidents that could jeopardize safe sea and air transportation (reminiscent of the Korean Air Lines tragedy in 1983).

Many South Koreans were impressed with Gorbachev's proposals because he mentioned his interest in reducing arms on the Korean peninsula and referred to South Korea as an independent state. It is likely that Gorbachev gave this recognition in part to induce South Korean economic cooperation with the Soviet Union. At the time, some in the West were withholding judgment on *glasnost* and its impact, but South Korea's innermost political circles were already preparing to assist the Russians in joining the international market economy.<sup>2</sup>

Gorbachev's Krasnoyarsk speech emboldened South Korea to deal with North Korea more actively and positively with regard to arms and tension reduction. This speech and subsequent developments, e.g., the economic difficulties in the former Soviet Union,

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<sup>1</sup>See FBIS-EAS, July 29, 1986, pp. 1-20.

<sup>2</sup>Chong-ch'on Paek, "Tong Buk-A kukje chilsu-ui pyonhwa-wa yongh'ang" [Changes and Impacts of Northeast Asian International Order], *The Korean Journal of Unification Affairs*, Fall 1990, p. 88.

convinced many South Koreans that Moscow would no longer provide North Korea with arms on the scale of the Cold War, thereby strengthening the South's hope that serious arms reductions would be possible. Events following the failed Soviet coup of August 1991 have markedly strengthened this belief. The former Soviet Union, seeking economic benefits, has shifted much of its support from North to South Korea. The Russians desire to join the Pacific Rim economic community. They are likely to participate in and support arms control in the region if it helps them with their own economic problems.

## **CHINA**

Since the Sino-Soviet summit in May 1989, the Chinese press has virtually abandoned its references to a "Soviet threat." On the other hand, Sino-U.S. relations have palpably cooled, particularly since the Tiananmen incident in June 1989. While the Chinese leadership emphasizes China's concern with the security situation on the Korean peninsula, its economic interest in South Korea appears to take priority over political-military considerations, as indicated by the opening of trade offices between the two countries in 1991. Beijing has done little with regard to tension and arms reduction in Korea, perhaps because the Chinese leadership is more concerned about promoting communist solidarity in Asia than in using what influence it has to pressure Pyongyang on this point. The Chinese are also undoubtedly aware that they, like all other nations, have little influence on North Korean decisions, and that directly pressuring the North Koreans may be counterproductive.<sup>3</sup>

Beijing continues to offer diplomatic support to Pyongyang, even though it is much attracted by the economic inducements of the South Koreans. But ultimately, as Korea's closest land neighbor, China wants to maintain stability on the peninsula. Moreover, the goal of China's foreign policy, to the extent that it can fashion one in this time of domestic instability, will be to keep the Japanese from becoming too dominant in the region. China is likely to side with North Korea as long as that regime appears viable, and Beijing is therefore unlikely to support any arms-reduction proposals not favored by Pyongyang.

## **JAPAN**

At the end of the 1980s, two developments on the Korean peninsula sparked debate within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party leadership. One was Seoul's dynamic pursuit of

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<sup>3</sup>The Chinese response to Japanese foreign minister Michio Watanabe's request that China pressure North Korea to abandon its alleged nuclear weapons development program is cited in FBIS-EAS, January 8, 1992, pp. 10-11 Annex.

its own "Northern Policy," of which the main goals were to establish diplomatic relations with the communist countries and to launch renewed efforts to draw the North into contact with the South in order to lay the foundation for eventual reunification. The success of this diplomatic strategy has awakened the conservative LDP leaders, who fear that Japan will be the last nation to respond to the new era of East-West detente.

The second development that caught Tokyo's attention was North Korea's reported nuclear weapons development. Japan has been the victim of North Korean terrorism—for example, the kidnapping of Japanese seamen and the 1987 bombing of a Korean Air Lines plane that killed more than thirty Japanese—and the nuclear weapons news caused much nervousness. The Tokyo government has been seeking methods to defuse this threat by holding diplomatic consultations with the Chinese, Russians, and Americans, as well as with the North Koreans themselves.

The Japanese are caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, they remain reluctant to take on the role of world or regional political leader. Japan's prime minister, Kiichi Miyazawa, made this point clear in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, when he suggested that his country's political culture makes the Japanese more comfortable playing a supporting role than a leadership role.<sup>4</sup> But comfortable or not, the Japanese have too much at stake to sit quietly and let events in the region take their course. Arms reduction in Korea is a good example of this dilemma. Japan cannot undertake any bold initiatives, because of the two Koreas' equal suspicion and hatred of the Japanese. At the same time, Japan must try to prevent Pyongyang from developing a nuclear weapons capability that could threaten the stability of the region and Japan directly.

The Japanese certainly must have mixed feelings about facilitating the reunification of Korea, which might then become a formidable military and economic rival. But Japan desires stability on the Korean peninsula, and for this reason it would support arms reduction if it seemed to lessen the possibility of inter-Korean conflict, even if the arms reduction were an important step toward Korean reunification.

Japan's defense specialists seem to agree upon the following: (1) In the 1990s the countries of Northeast Asia—China, Japan, and the two Koreas—will pursue their own national interests more assertively as the Cold War confrontation between the two superpowers subsides. (2) Japan's predominant role will be as the region's economic superpower. (3) Japan will not try to change North Korea too abruptly; instead, Pyongyang should be allowed to find its own way toward liberalization and reform. (4) There is a need to

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<sup>4</sup>Interview with Kiichi Miyazawa, *Los Angeles Times*, October 13, 1991.

pursue a more direct form of military cooperation between Japan and South Korea in order to ensure the region's stability. Even so, it is still too soon to seek direct bilateral defense cooperation. Currently, information sharing, exchanges of students and military personnel, and close consultation with regard to North Korea are the steps being followed.<sup>5</sup>

## THE UNITED STATES

In February 1990 the Department of Defense issued a report entitled *A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Looking Toward the 21st Century*, otherwise known as the East Asia Strategy Initiative (EASI). It outlined a three-step gradual withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea.<sup>6</sup> The report was widely viewed as signaling the beginning of a complete U.S. troop withdrawal, even though it implies that some troops will remain. Korean defense analysts were particularly interested in two points: (1) In the future, the main mission of the U.S. forces in Korea will be to ensure regional stability, replacing the current mission of deterring potential threats from North Korea or the former Soviet Union. (2) U.S. forces in Korea will increasingly play a supporting role rather than their current lead role in maintaining the security of the peninsula.

Difficulties will undoubtedly occur during the transition to a more equal U.S.-South Korea defense partnership. North Korea's interest in developing its own nuclear weapons will make this adjustment even more difficult. The "Koreanization" of South Korea's own defense, the so-called independent defense capability, will be pursued within the context of a continuing strong alliance with the United States. The United States has at least four reasons to play an active role in attempting to reduce tensions between the two Koreas for at least four reasons: (1) the United States has strong interests in regional stability; (2) it was a signatory of the 1953 Truce Agreement with China and North Korea; (3) the future of North-South Korean relations will help determine the level of military resources the United States must maintain in the region; and (4) the United States is executive agent for the UN in Korea.

The United States has partial troop withdrawal on its agenda, in part for budgetary reasons. At the same time, it wishes to maintain some military presence in key regions of

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<sup>5</sup>See Noboru Matsuura, "Personal Opinion on How to Get Close and Close Relationship between Republic of Korea and Japan on the Security Aspect" [sic], and Hideshi Takesada, "Japanese-North Korean Relations and Their Implications for the Future Security of the Region," papers presented at the 5th Annual Conference of the Council on U.S.-Korean Security Studies, Seoul, November 16-18, 1989. See also Masao Okonogi, "The Korean Peninsula: The Rival of the Old Equilibrium in the New Context," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, Spring 1989, pp. 66-69.

<sup>6</sup>*A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Looking Toward the 21st Century*, U.S. Department of Defense mimeo, February 1990.

the world, including Northeast Asia. Arms reduction on the Korean peninsula is thus consistent with American goals, especially if it is instrumental in diminishing the North Korean threat. Insofar as arms reduction might lead to a reunified Korea, Washington's official position is that it supports a unified Korea under a democratic and open market-oriented system. The United States' primary interest is in maintaining peace on the peninsula. The question of reunification has been left up to the two Koreas.

#### **PROSPECTS FOR ARMS CONTROL**

It seems unlikely that these regional influences on arms reduction, important as they are, will exert the decisive influence on North and South Korea. The crucial factor lies in the relationship between these two governments.

North Korea has lost much of the military support of its traditional allies, China and the former Soviet Union, in terms of both supplies at "friendship" prices and the support it could expect if it launched an attack against South Korea. South Korea still has the firm support of its ally, the United States, and in the past it presumably has been protected by a nuclear "mini-umbrella" provided by U.S. tactical nuclear weapons that were assumed to be based in South Korea as well as by the U.S. strategic nuclear umbrella. North Korea apparently does not now have access to nuclear weapons, but it projects a continued threat by virtue of its previous willingness to undermine the South (both in the Korean War and in countless smaller incidents since then).

How would each side benefit from arms reduction? The North would clearly benefit in economic terms, for its present arms expenditures (estimated by the South Koreans to be 21 percent of GNP in 1990) impose a crushing burden on its weak economy. It could also benefit to the extent that arms reduction modified the international image of belligerency that it has earned for itself.

South Korea would also benefit economically from arms reduction, although its present defense burden (reportedly 4.1 percent of GNP) is not as heavy as the North's.<sup>7</sup> Reciprocal arms reduction would benefit the South by reducing its fears of attack and removing one roadblock to establishing a closer relationship with North Korea, a relationship that most South Koreans want.

What are the current prospects for significant arms control? Given the mood of suspicion on both sides, the immediate prospects appear dim. Even as changes occur in the regional and international environment, North and South Korea are caught in a cycle of

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<sup>7</sup>Arms expenditures as estimated by South Korea's National Unification Board, cited in *Vantage Point*, September 1991, p. 22.

mutual distrust. Certainly some changes have occurred: At this writing, six rounds of high-level talks between the prime ministers of the two Koreas have been held. A joint table-tennis team has been formed. South Korean parliamentarians were invited to participate in the 85th annual Inter-Parliamentary Union hosted by Pyongyang in 1991. Indirect trade between North and South increased dramatically in 1991, and for the first time in the history of the divided country, one instance of direct trade occurred. In the reconciliation and nonaggression agreement, the two sides have reached an accord *in principle* on a variety of measures to increase cooperation and reduce tension. But the North continues its hostile propaganda against South Korea, the United States, and Japan, and it expresses renewed commitment to its own form of socialism and its peculiar political succession. It is far too early to conclude that the North Korean regime has changed its basic political and economic strategies or its perception of external threats.

North Korea has had only one leader in its 45-year history: President Kim Il Sung. When he dies, radical changes may occur within a short period, and a replay of the East European transformation is not unthinkable. In this sense, the pessimistic predictions concerning arms reduction do not refer to the first decade of the 21st century, but only to the next several years.

#### 4. SOUTH KOREAN VIEWS ON A NUCLEAR-FREE KOREA

"Nuclear consciousness" was low in South Korea until 1989. In May of that year, *Dong-A Ilbo*, one of the most widely read and respected dailies in Korea, carried a special article entitled "Possession of Nuclear Weapons an Open Secret."<sup>1</sup> In April, *Wolgan Chosun*, a monthly political journal, published a special report on "North Korea's Nuclear Game."<sup>2</sup> A July report in *The Washington Post* on North Korea's nuclear program increased public awareness of the issue in Korea and in the United States.<sup>3</sup> In August 1990, *Shin Dong-A*, another major political journal, carried an article on North Korea's nuclear development.<sup>4</sup> In September 1990, *Chosun Ilbo*, Seoul's major daily, carried an editorial entitled "Converting the Korean Peninsula into a Nuclear-Free Zone."<sup>5</sup>

Before President Bush's announcement of a unilateral worldwide withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons, there was widespread dissatisfaction, especially among neonationalist South Koreans, with the assumed presence of U.S. nuclear weapons on Korean soil. Specifically, many Koreans objected to such a presence on several grounds: (1) the U.S. "no confirmation, no denial" policy was both condescending toward South Korea and a violation of Korean sovereignty; (2) the presence of the weapons blocked prospects for unification, since the North made their removal one of the preconditions for reunification; and (3) the demise of communism in the former Soviet Union and the greatly reduced support that North Korea could count on from its communist and former communist allies significantly reduced the threat it could pose to the South.

Since the December 1991 announcement by President Roh Tae Woo of South Korea that there are no nuclear weapons in the South, attention has shifted to the danger posed by the North's nuclear weapons development program. But when South Korea's former defense minister Yi Chong-ku suggested the "possibility of military action" to end the North Korean nuclear threat, the suggestion was met with strong and widespread public condemnation.<sup>6</sup> Although the populace understood the urgency of stopping North Korea's nuclear weapons development, it objected to this military option on the grounds that it could trigger another

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<sup>1</sup>See FBIS-EAS, April 27, 1989, pp. 26-29.

<sup>2</sup>Kap-je Cho, "Hanbando-ui haekgeim" [The Nuclear Game on the Korean Peninsula], *Wolgan Chosun*, April 1990, pp. 251-253.

<sup>3</sup>*The Washington Post*, July 29, 1989, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>See FBIS-EAS, September 7, 1990, pp. 29-35.

<sup>5</sup>See FBIS-EAS, September 18, 1990, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup>Seoul YONHAP, September 27, 1991, as cited in FBIS-EAS, September 27, 1991, p. 23.



Korean war, perhaps involving the use of nuclear weapons on one or both sides. South Koreans were likewise alarmed and outraged by the U.S. congressional hearings on the North Korean nuclear development (which were televised in South Korea), during which the attack proposal was made by some U.S. military experts.<sup>7</sup> The South is committed to a peaceful resolution of the nuclear weapons problem on the Korean peninsula.

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<sup>7</sup>This public response was communicated to the author in an interview with a South Korean government official of the National Unification Board, December 16, 1991, at RAND, Santa Monica, California.

## 5. NORTH KOREAN VIEWS ON A NUCLEAR-FREE KOREA

North Korea, which, so far as is known, has never had nuclear weapons based on its soil, has for a number of years advocated a nuclear-free Korea.<sup>1</sup> North Korea first brought up the nuclear-free issue in 1976, presumably in response to South Korean President Park Chung-hee's statement, "If necessary, the Republic of Korea will develop nuclear weapons on our own." Park said this (in response to a proposed U.S. troop withdrawal) despite the fact that South Korea had signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) the preceding year.

Pyongyang's official proposal of denuclearization was not made until June 23, 1986. In September of that year, North Korea hosted an International Conference for Denuclearization and Peace on the Korean Peninsula. North Korea has periodically renewed its calls for a nuclear-free Korea, and in 1988 it said that "*North and South Korea must adopt [planned] measures to remove nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula and withdraw foreign forces as well*" (emphasis added). This could suggest that the North was either working on a nuclear weapons capability or trying to give the impression that it was.

In the past several years there has been speculation that North Korea was developing its own nuclear weapons capability. On November 16, 1990, Japan's JIJI news service reported that the U.S. government had presented Tokyo with photos and other evidence strongly suggesting that North Korea was developing such weapons at Yongbyon, less than 100 kilometers north of Pyongyang. The photographs were of two atomic reactors, as well as what appears to be a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant under construction. It has been estimated that North Korea could have a nuclear weapon by the mid-1990s or even sooner.<sup>2</sup> Ko Yong-hwan, a North Korean diplomat who defected to Seoul while he was serving as a first secretary at the North Korean embassy in the Congo, expressed his conviction that Pyongyang would produce nuclear weapons within three years. In a press interview in

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<sup>1</sup>See FBIS-EAS, September 1, 1990, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Leonard S. Spector and Jacqueline R. Smith estimate "several years before Pyongyang will be able to deploy its first nuclear weapon." "North Korea: The Next Nuclear Nightmare?" *Arms Control Today*, March 1991, pp. 8-13. Andrew Mack ("North Korea and The Bomb," *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1991, pp. 87-104) cites (1) a July 1989 South Korean estimate of the mid-1990s; (2) Pentagon and Defense Intelligence Agency estimates of "three to five years away from a workable weapon"; and (3) a Department of Energy estimate of "several years or more." Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., writing in *Jane's Intelligence Review* (September 1991, pp. 404-411) speculates that "if . . . North Korea is pursuing [sic] its nuclear weapons programme in the same multiple-path fashion as the Iraqis did, and wanted to achieve a nuclear weapons capability sooner, it apparently possesses the scientific, technological and industrial capability to *currently* produce a small, crude enriched uranium bomb" (emphasis added) p. 410.

Seoul, he said that North Korean objectives are first to achieve nuclear weapons development and second to establish diplomatic relations with Japan, while forcing the United States to withdraw its nuclear weapons deployed in South Korea.<sup>3</sup>

In 1990, even before the latest round of news reports, North Korea had denied it was developing nuclear weapons. When a high-level Liberal Democratic Party delegation from Japan visited Kim Il Sung in September 1990, Kim (who reportedly has a villa overlooking the Yongbyon site) said, "We are not developing nuclear weapons. The reported nuclear production system observed from a satellite is an atomic power research institute built by the Soviet Union. Our republic has neither the desire nor the ability to produce them."<sup>4</sup> This assertion was repeated by Foreign Minister Kim Yong Nam in an interview with *Jane's Defence Weekly* in September 1991.<sup>5</sup>

Since the North lacks nuclear weapons, it has always considered the U.S. nuclear capability, especially that allegedly based in the South, to be a serious threat. Now that South Korea and other nations with interests in the region see the Yongbyon facility as a threat, North Korea has, not surprisingly, sought to link the perceived threat from the South with this new perceived threat from the North.

Whether the goal of the Yongbyon facility is the development of nuclear weapons, or whether for North Korea the *appearance* of weapons development is the primary goal, is not conclusively known. It seems highly likely that Pyongyang is serious about weapons development. That would certainly be plausible, given its longstanding inferiority to the U.S. side with respect to nuclear weapons capability. The declared withdrawal of all U.S. nuclear weapons from the South thus poses a direct challenge to the North's continued pursuit of this goal.

Another possibility is that North Korea is not concerned with the actual acquisition of nuclear weapons but simply wants to develop the technology, giving it both an option for future weapons manufacture and a present-day arms-reduction bargaining chip.

A third possibility is that Pyongyang has neither the intention nor the capability to develop nuclear weapons, but is merely bluffing. This would also be consistent with the North Korean refusal to submit to IAEA inspection. Giving the illusion of weapons development would be cheaper than the actual development yet still useful as a bargaining chip. The weapons threat would be one of the few sources of leverage that remains for

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<sup>3</sup>Seoul YONHAP, September 13, 1991, as cited in FBIS-EAS, September 13, 1991, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup>See FBIS-EAS, March 5, 1990, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup>"The JDW Interview," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, September 14, 1991, p. 492.

Pyongyang. Alternatively, the North Koreans might come under such heavy international pressure that their weapons threat becomes more of a liability than an asset.

The North Korea nuclear weapons issue has received considerable international attention. It has become an important factor in negotiations with Japan on normalization of relations. When Gorbachev visited Tokyo in April 1991, Soviet officials accompanying him reportedly told the Japanese that unless North Korea accepted outside inspection, the Soviet Union would cut supplies of fuels and technology.<sup>6</sup> For its part, the United States considers full inspections to be a prerequisite for any improvement in relations with North Korea.

North Korea signed the NPT in 1985. By IAEA rules, nations signing the NPT are required within 18 months to sign the Nuclear Safeguards Accord (NSA), which provides for inspection of nuclear facilities. At an IAEA directors' conference in Vienna in February 1990, North Korea placed the following conditions on signing the accord: (1) the United States must remove all nuclear weapons from South Korean territory; (2) the Team Spirit exercises must be discontinued; and (3) "North Korea reserves the right to regard the Nuclear Safeguards Accord as null and void, depending upon Pyongyang's evaluation of the attitudes of countries which possess nuclear weapons."<sup>7</sup>

On July 15, 1990, Pyongyang's foreign ministry spokesman said that North Korea was ready to conclude a safeguards agreement with the IAEA at such time as "the United States removes its nuclear threat from us."<sup>8</sup> Throughout the summer of 1991, Pyongyang indicated its intention to sign the safeguards agreement at the September 12, 1991, meeting of the IAEA board of governors. But when the time came, Ambassador-at-Large Oh Chang-rim refused to sign. Two days later, a spokesman for the North Korean foreign ministry issued a statement attributing Pyongyang's refusal to sign to the fact that the United States, Japan, and some other countries had adopted an "unjustified resolution unilaterally urging Pyongyang to sign the NSA."<sup>9</sup>

To the end of 1991, Pyongyang continued to insist that it would soon sign the safeguards accord. On the last day of the year, North and South Korea did sign a Joint Declaration for a Non-Nuclear Korean Peninsula, to take effect at the February 1992 high-level talks.<sup>10</sup> In the declaration, the two sides not only agreed to renounce the possession

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<sup>6</sup>*Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 9, 1991, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup>See FBIS-EAS, September 1, 1990, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup>*Korean Report*, October 1990, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup>See FBIS-EAS, September 16, 1991, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup>An English translation published in the South by the *Korea Times* (January 1, 1992, p. 1) can be found in FBIS-EAS, January 2, 1992, p. 21. The North's similarly worded English-language version is provided by KCNA (January 21, 1992), as quoted in FBIS-EAS, January 21, 1992, pp. 20-21.

and use of nuclear weapons and facilities for nuclear fuel reprocessing and uranium enrichment, but also promised to undergo inspections of locations chosen by the other side (and agreed to by both parties). The inspections are to be carried out under the auspices of a "joint nuclear control commission." The wording of the declaration, especially as it pertains to the inspections, is vague, and no mention is made of the IAEA inspections that the North had said it would soon accept. An additional problem is that neither North nor South has the expertise to inspect each other's facilities, although both sides have reportedly been seeking training in that area.<sup>11</sup> While Seoul and Pyongyang appeared pleased with the document, its vagueness has been viewed with skepticism in the United States.

North Korea finally signed the Nuclear Safeguards Accord on January 30, 1992, although strongly denying that it was doing so under pressure. The next step will be the ratification of the treaty by the North Korean government, and then discussions with the IAEA on implementing inspections. Pak Kil-hyon, the North Korean ambassador to the United Nations, said that the accord would be ratified "within six months."<sup>12</sup> As regards the method and scope of inspection, the North Koreans have repeatedly stated that the inspections will be made "in accordance with IAEA procedures."

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<sup>11</sup>*Chungang Ilbo* (Seoul), February 9, 1992, p. 1; cited in FBIS-EAS, February 10, 1992, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted on KBS-1 Radio in Seoul, February 4, 1992; cited in FBIS-EAS, February 4, 1992, p. 21.

## 6. OPTIONS FOR NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL

There are at least four options for achieving nuclear arms reduction on the Korean peninsula. The "unilateral withdrawal" option envisions a unilateral withdrawal of any U.S. nuclear weapons that might be based in South Korea. Consistent with this option, on September 27, 1991, President Bush announced his intention to remove all tactical nuclear weapons worldwide from the U.S. arsenal. The decision to take this step was made primarily in response to the changing situation in the Soviet Union, and was not framed as a CBM to stimulate arms control on the Korean peninsula. The "nuclear linkage" option (now largely obsolete) would tie a U.S. nuclear withdrawal to North Korea's opening of its nuclear facilities to IAEA inspection and its pledge not to develop nuclear weapons. The "political-economic linkage" option would link inspections in North Korea with various inducements (or threats of punishment), for example, economic assistance and diplomatic recognition from Japan, the United States, or other nations. In an "attack" option, the United States would lead, or participate in, a series of commando raids or air strikes against suspected North Korean nuclear weapons facilities. Each option is discussed below.

### UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL

This option has already been exercised. One result of guaranteeing the nuclear-free status of South Korea should be to persuade the North Koreans that they do not need their own nuclear weapons to defend against a South Korean-U.S. nuclear threat. Unilateral withdrawal should thus be a significant CBM, but there is no guarantee that the North will respond positively.

Unilateral arms reduction, while it may appear naive, does have several points to recommend it. At least in the short term, it reduces or eliminates the number of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula. Also, such a move enables the United States to take the high ground in the moral debate about denuclearization.

A disadvantage of this option is that a threatened nuclear presence cannot be used as a bargaining chip to induce North Korea to discontinue its nuclear weapons program, although it is not known what value the North Koreans place on this particular chip. Also, the announcement that there are no nuclear weapons in South Korea could weaken the South's defenses, although any lack of nuclear weapons might be compensated for by conventional weapons. If nuclear weapons are needed in the event of an attack or threat of

an attack, they might be financially and/or politically costly to introduce at a later date into South Korea.

A final consideration is that the North Koreans might see unilateral removal as a sign of U.S. weakness, prompting them to assume a more belligerent posture toward South Korea. This has so far not turned out to be the case. On the contrary, the North Koreans have responded to President Bush's nuclear weapons withdrawal announcement and President Roh's declaration of a nuclear-free South Korea by signing the Joint Non-Nuclear Declaration and the IAEA's Nuclear Safeguards Accord.

### NUCLEAR LINKAGE

Under this option the United States would attempt to strike a deal with North Korea, promising to open its bases to IAEA inspection (after first removing any nuclear weapons) if Pyongyang did the same. Since the first draft of this Note was written, President Bush's announcement of the worldwide withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons has changed the nature of this option. After Bush's proposal, North Korea at first expressed doubt about the timetable for the removal, and then insisted that the U.S. nuclear umbrella also be removed from South Korea and that the United States and other regional nuclear powers (i.e., China and the former Soviet Union) offer a "legal guarantee" that nuclear weapons would not be used against North Korea in the future. It is unlikely that this broader nuclear linkage proposal will be acceptable to the United States or South Korea, but it is nonetheless a bargaining point.

This option, like the first, would entail a variety of practical problems in terms of inspection—the same sorts of problems that the United Nations has encountered in its inspections in Iraq. In fact, it is hard to imagine just what scope and form of inspection the North Koreans would permit. In his remarks to the United Nations on October 2, 1991 (after President Bush's withdrawal announcement), North Korean premier Yon Hyong Muk said, "The matter of nuclear inspection in our country cannot be resolved apart from the particular environment prevailing in our country."<sup>1</sup> Is he referring to the *possibility* of an inspection, or the *implementation* of one?

Inspection will be far more difficult than in the Iraqi case, because the United Nations will not be conducting the inspection in a "defeated" nation. Also, the mountainous terrain of North Korea will make concealment of nuclear weapons (or nuclear weapons grade material) relatively easy. The demands that North Korea submit to challenge inspections (rather than

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<sup>1</sup>Yon Hyong Muk, *Statement to the 46th Session of U.S. General Assembly*, New York, October 2, 1991. From a press release of the DPRK Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

inviting inspectors into specific sites) and that it destroy its nuclear fuel reprocessing facilities are especially problematical. A sample of what might be in store for IAEA inspectors is reported in a *Newsweek* article, which recounts how an attempted 1989 IAEA inspection fared at Yongbyon: "The North Koreans allowed only one member in. He was not a scientist. He was allowed to go only at night, and just after he arrived a power failure blacked out the plant. He saw nothing."<sup>2</sup> Another problem is presented by Spector and Smith in their *Arms Control Today* article: "If North Korea were to complete a plutonium extraction plant, it would be legally entitled to stockpile weapons-usable plutonium as long as the material were under IAEA inspection. This would leave it dangerously close to possessing nuclear weapons."<sup>3</sup> The evenhanded IAEA has, after all, provided assistance to Pyongyang with its uranium mining program as part of North Korea's civil nuclear program.<sup>4</sup>

Washington does not favor making any linkage "deals" with Pyongyang, taking instead the position that the North Koreans are obligated by IAEA membership to accept inspection. This is a very logical view of the situation, but it is unlikely that North Koreans view the legitimacy of the IAEA with as much seriousness as the Americans do. In part as a consequence of the success of longstanding U.S. attempts to isolate North Korea, the North has developed a siege mentality that perceives much of the international community as pawns of Western capitalistic imperialism. It is probably unreasonable to expect that North Korea will feel under any strong obligation to comply with IAEA inspection requests. Pyongyang will have to be shown that its best interests are served by accepting inspection. If the United States and other nations are unwilling to come up with appropriate inducements or punishments, either officially or unofficially, the goal of a denuclearized Korea is unlikely to be achieved.

#### **POLITICAL-ECONOMIC LINKAGE**

An alternative to *quid pro quo* linkage is to offer to trade North Korean inspection of its nuclear facilities for economic or diplomatic inducements, coming either from the United States and South Korea or from other countries such as Japan. Another version of the option is to threaten the withdrawal of economic or diplomatic relations if the North refuses to accept inspection.

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<sup>2</sup>"A Knock on the Nuclear Door?" *Newsweek*, April 29, 1991, p. 38. *Dong-A-Ilbo* (February 26, 1992, p. 3; cited in FBIS-EAS, February 27, 1992, pp. 19-20) provides a more detailed corroborative version of this inspection attempt, implying that the year was 1988 rather than 1989.

<sup>3</sup>Spector and Smith, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Mack, p. 88.



Like the original nuclear linkage option, this approach would involve a known timetable for inspection. The use of inducements would have the added advantage of helping to bring North Korea out of its diplomatic and economic isolation. But this option would involve a number of participants, perhaps even the United Nations, and would thus be more difficult to implement. And like the other two options, it would involve problems of inspection and verification.

Is there anything that China, the former Soviet Union, Japan, or the United States could do to induce the North to submit to IAEA inspection? Given the North's strong independence line, perhaps not. Moscow is presumably putting pressure on Pyongyang for such an inspection regime, but given their fragile diplomatic relationship and Moscow's severely limited capacity to provide aid to North Korea, Russian influence on North Korea is not great.

The Chinese seem reluctant to push Pyongyang on this point, at least publicly. While China may not feel directly threatened by a North Korean nuclear arsenal, Pyongyang's nuclear development will hardly be to China's advantage. A recent Chinese statement bears on this issue. In an IAEA press conference in Vienna on October 4, 1991, Chinese foreign minister Qian Qichen reportedly said that "the development of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula is undesirable not only for the peninsula, but also for China."<sup>5</sup>

The Japanese have recently begun talks with the North Koreans aimed at establishing a basis for normalization of diplomatic relations, and in the context of these talks they have brought up the IAEA inspection issue. Up to February 1992 there have been six meetings between working-level diplomats from the two countries. At the first meeting, held in Beijing in January 1991, the North Koreans demanded not only "war reparations" for the 1910-1945 Japanese colonial rule, but also "compensation for North Korea's suffering and losses" from 1945 to the present, on the grounds that Japanese colonial rule was a major cause of the subsequent division of Korea. The Japanese refused to discuss the post-1945 compensation. The principal Japanese demand is that Pyongyang allow IAEA inspection of its nuclear facilities.<sup>6</sup>

Little progress has been made in the subsequent rounds of talks. Even after Pyongyang signed the safeguards accord, coinciding with the sixth round of talks, Japan insisted that the implementation of full inspections be a precondition for diplomatic relations. North Korea has continued to maintain that this issue is irrelevant to the

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<sup>5</sup>*Dong-A Ilbo*, October 5, 1991, p. 1. Cited in FBIS-EAS, October 8, 1991, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup>*North Korea News*, February 11, 1991, pp. 2-3.

normalization talks, and has found fault with Japan's manner of settling their past differences. But the North Koreans' desire for diplomatic relations gives Japan a certain amount of leverage over North Korea's decision to undergo nuclear inspections.

Pyongyang's willingness to undergo full inspections has also been made a precondition to upgraded relations with Washington. After 17 counselor-level meetings with the North Koreans in Beijing, the United States consented to a higher-level meeting in New York on January 22, 1992, between Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Arnold Kanter and Kim Yongsun, the Korean Workers Party secretary for international affairs. No details of the talks were made available, but the major topic was apparently North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

## **ATTACK**

Air strikes or commando raids against suspected North Korean nuclear facilities would avoid difficult problems of negotiation. Military action has in fact been mentioned by South Korea's defense minister as a way to deal with the North Korean nuclear threat.<sup>7</sup> Advantages of this option are that elimination of the North Korean facilities would be within a known time frame, assuming the attacks could be successfully made, and that the attacks would provide a show of U.S. strength that might serve to intimidate North Korea. Disadvantages include uncertainty about success, the cost in lives, the danger of counterattack, strong international objections, and the dramatically heightened fear and hostility that would be generated in North Korea.

Much of North Korea's defense industry is housed in underground installations, and it is likely that Pyongyang has put as much of its nuclear weapons facilities underground as is practicable. A recent North Korean defector believes there is more than one nuclear site.<sup>8</sup> Air strikes alone might not be sufficient to destroy these facilities; in any case, without extensive ground inspection, the success of air attacks could not be determined. Given the difficulties of such an operation, and the strength and ferocity of the North Korean armed forces, this option should be undertaken only if South Korea and the United States are willing and able to wage a full-scale war against North Korea.

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<sup>7</sup>See FBIS-EAS, September 27, 1991, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup>Tokyo NHK General Television Network, September 13, 1991; cited in FBIS-EAS, September 16, 1991, p. 13.

## 7. DISCUSSION

The nuclear arms situation on the Korean peninsula has become a focus of international concern. Although South Korea is now nuclear free, the nuclear weapons program in the North may lead to the reintroduction of such weapons on the peninsula, triggering a nuclear arms buildup in the region.

At this writing, Pyongyang has categorically denied having the intention or capability to develop nuclear weapons. The United States is equally strong in its assertion that North Korea does have a nuclear weapons program that may be able to produce weapons within the next year or two. Pyongyang has signed the Nuclear Safeguards Accord and indicated that it will be ratified by April 1992, after which arrangements will be made for IAEA inspection of its nuclear facilities. South Korea has requested reciprocal pilot inspections of suspected nuclear sites at an early date, but the North has not made a reasonable response.

North Korea's negotiations with the IAEA and South Korea, as well as its discussions with the United States and Japan, have proceeded slowly. While Pyongyang has agreed to nonproliferation in principle, it has dragged its feet on implementation. The negotiations and discussions have been hampered by a variety of factors. The international community is suspicious of Pyongyang's promises, given its reputation for saying one thing and doing another. Memory of past North Korean aggressions is also strong. And, unfortunately, there are no personal relationships between responsible officials in Pyongyang and any of their Western counterparts that might build trust and help them overcome differences in positions.

On the North Korean side, a fierce pride causes the leadership to resist outside pressure. And while North Korea has publicly agreed to honor its Nonproliferation Treaty obligations and forgo the development of nuclear weapons, it is likely that its private position (and the private position of many other small nations) is that such weapons are not only a right but a necessity.

President Kim has frequently voiced the opinion that all nations are equal, regardless of size, and a reasonable extension of that belief is that all nations have the same rights when it comes to the possession of nuclear weapons. North Korea is bordered on the north by two nuclear powers; on the south it faces South Korea, which is protected by the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Only 600 kilometers offshore lies Japan, which has both the materials and quite possibly the technology to develop nuclear weapons on short notice, although the Japanese have forsworn the possession of such weapons. The Kim regime, held in low regard by most

of its neighbors, doubtless has considered that in a future world order of multilateral power centers, each nation must look to its own security. This is a powerful argument for the development of a nuclear weapons deterrent.

This Note has presented several options for inducing North Korea to forsake nuclear weapons development. President Roh Tae Woo has declared that there are no nuclear weapons in South Korea, although Washington has never confirmed such a withdrawal with Pyongyang. The costs of further unilateral withdrawals are high. Removing the U.S. nuclear umbrella or the remainder of U.S. troops from South Korea, either unilaterally or in some linkage deal with Pyongyang, is politically and militarily risky for South Korea as well as for the United States and the nations of Northeast Asia. Even if the risk could be taken, Pyongyang might simply demand even more "concessions" from the South, such as diplomatic recognition from the United States.

The attack option entails high costs and no certainty of success. The possibility that such an attack might trigger another Korean war must be taken seriously. And the success of an attack, even if it did not trigger war or retaliation, would be difficult to verify, since the North Korean nuclear weapons facilities are almost certainly dispersed and partially hidden. By signing the reconciliation and nonaggression agreement, South Korea has pledged not to attack the North. If it abides by this agreement, the United States would have to carry out such an attack unilaterally, unless it could line up international support. Given the expressed attitudes of the North Korean leadership, the mere threat of an attack would be unlikely to induce Pyongyang to accept inspection. Rather, the nuclear program would be hidden and "hardened" even more.

As a variation on the attack option, subversion of the North Korean regime is a long-term alternative. If the present regime could be replaced, a new regime might be more willing to renounce the possession of nuclear weapons. The least intrusive form of influence would take the form of social, economic, and political contacts (such as South Korea has been making) to gradually open North Korea to outside influences. As firmly entrenched as the present North Korean regime is, change induced through increased contact is likely to be a long-term proposition, and in the meantime the North would almost surely develop nuclear weapons. South Korea's pledge not to subvert the North rules out any overt effort to undermine the current regime.

The most promising option is the political-economic linkage approach, which is being pursued by several nations. The United States has made any upgrade in talks contingent on North Korea's implementing the IAEA inspections. The inspection issue is also the key to

Pyongyang's likelihood of establishing relations with Tokyo and gaining substantial compensation payments.

Interestingly, until Washington put pressure on Seoul, the South Koreans did not link nuclear inspection to improvement in political and economic relations with the North. The failure to pursue such a linkage could be due to Seoul's belief that a linkage approach would not succeed or its concern that such an approach, even if successful, would prevent improvement of relations with the North. After coming under pressure from Washington, the South Koreans have agreed to link further substantive economic contacts with the North's demonstration of its willingness to submit to nuclear inspections. It is hard to tell whether this approach will be successful. The North Korean economy is relatively independent of other economies, and if China continues to support it, Pyongyang can survive without economic ties to the capitalist countries. Even without Chinese assistance, North Korea might well adopt a "zero-option" economic plan similar to the one that Fidel Castro has envisioned for Cuba under similar circumstances.

A tougher form of economic-political linkage would be provided by economic sanctions imposed by individual countries or international organizations. These were not effective in ejecting Iraq from Kuwait, and they may very well not work in the North Korean case. In order for this option to be pursued, the assistance of China and Russia would be essential, and it is far from certain that China would agree. International sanctions sponsored by the United Nations would be liable to a Chinese veto in the Security Council.

The goal of negotiations and discussions with the North Koreans has been to convince them to live up to their nonproliferation pledge and renounce nuclear weapons. The present means to achieve this end is through political/economic linkage; specifically to suggest that if the North permits full inspection, its political and economic relationships with the outside world will improve. Neither the North Korean inspection schedule nor the timetable for its nuclear weapons development is known. At the present slow rate of progress on this issue, it is conceivable that the North can develop important components of nuclear weapons before granting inspection.

One approach to speeding up the inspection timetable would be to issue North Korea an ultimatum. While risky, this might bring an end to North Korean foot-dragging. The ultimatum would state that if the North did not implement inspections by a certain date, specific sanctions would be imposed. Since the IAEA allows a maximum of 90 days for a government to ratify the safeguards accord, a date in June 1992 would be a reasonable ultimatum deadline. Meanwhile, relevant parties—the IAEA, the United States, and South Korea—would prepare inspection teams that could enter North Korea the moment the

agreement was ratified. If the North did not permit the teams to enter by the deadline, economic sanctions in the form of an embargo would immediately go into effect.

While the forceful approach to negotiation might succeed, it is fraught with difficulties. If the sanctions were sponsored by the United Nations, which would be most desirable, considerable lobbying would be required to get a UN resolution passed. Even if a UN-sponsored or U.S.-led embargo were imposed, there is the possibility that China or other nations might ignore it. Only if China and Russia agreed to such an embargo could it be successfully implemented. Another possibility is that North Korea could survive even a fairly complete embargo. North Korean aggression to combat such an embargo must also be considered as a potential cost. Finally, if North Korea relents under the pressure of an ultimatum, the problem of incomplete compliance under forced inspection is always present.

An alternative negotiating strategy is to approach the nuclear weapons problem from the standpoint of considering the various interests of both North Korea and its regional neighbors and seek a solution that can address as many of those interests as possible, even if this means that North Korea's presumed interest in developing nuclear weapons is honored. So far, the U.S.-led negotiating strategy has been to insist on the nonproliferation position, with no compromise. Washington's principal, and perhaps only, interest has been to stop Pyongyang's nuclear weapons development. Other issues, such as human rights and economic and political reform, should also be discussed. Setting the nuclear question as the precondition for discussion of other issues is the same sort of single-minded approach to diplomacy that other nations accuse the North Koreans of practicing.

In the event that political and economic pressure does not dissuade the North Korean leadership from developing nuclear weapons, the United States must consider alternatives to its position. Washington has waited until almost the last minute to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons program. It may well be too late. The United States and other nations with interests in the region should also be considering how to live with a North Korea that clandestinely possesses nuclear weapons, distasteful as that option may be. Discussions between North Korea and other nations on mutual cooperation in pursuit of national interests can build an international community in which the existence of nuclear weapons, while always a serious threat, does not mean that they will be used.