

# Background

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## Getting China to Support a Denuclearized North Korea

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As United States diplomats enter the endgame in the negotiation phase of their North Korea strategy, they should be aware that China could prove to be more a part of the problem than of the solution in the upcoming “six-party” talks in Beijing on August 27–29.

Beijing’s decision to engage full-time with the Korean conundrum has come only after Washington’s tough, credible insistence that if North Korea’s nuclear weapons development cannot be ended peacefully, other methods will be used. If the Administration or Congress should begin to assume that China is on the side of the United States, however, Washington runs the risk of simply turning the clock back to August 1994 when the Chinese persuaded the Clinton Administration to give billions in aid to North Korea without first requiring Pyongyang to forswear its nuclear ambitions.

If U.S. negotiators are to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, they must have a clear-eyed view of China’s role in the North Korean nuclear issue:

- China will act in its own self-interest, and China’s interests diverge from America’s.
- China has been North Korea’s “nuclear enabler” for decades, helping the North to procure nuclear technology and supplying Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons program with Chinese-made equipment and materials.
- China clearly wants the United States to support North Korea economically to ease the costs on

- China has strategic reasons for acquiescing to a nuclear-armed North Korea and opposing American efforts to disarm it.
- Regardless of what Chinese diplomats say privately, China fully supports North Korea in public and has likely made private assurances to Pyongyang’s leaders as well.
- China has been North Korea’s “nuclear enabler” for decades, helping the North procure nuclear technology and supplying Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons program with Chinese-made equipment and materials.
- China clearly wants the United States to support North Korea economically to ease the costs on China and urges U.S. diplomatic recognition and a “nonaggression pact” to legitimate the existence of China’s client state—the world’s most terrifying dictatorship.
- China will not participate in the “Proliferation Security Initiative” and in the past has been North Korea’s partner in proliferation.

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## PREPARING FOR THE SIX-PARTY TALKS

In preparing for the Beijing talks, U.S. negotiators should:

- **Prepare for sharp differences with the Chinese.** Senior policymakers should admit that China and Russia do not share America’s interests on the Korean peninsula.
- **Consider alternatives to a negotiated agreement.** The six-party talks in Beijing are likely to bog down very quickly. Rather than allow North Korea to temporize indefinitely on its compliance with nonproliferation obligations, the United States should plan to move the issue expeditiously to the United Nations Security Council. France and the United Kingdom have signaled their support for such a move, and it is unlikely that either China or Russia can long withstand a determined campaign for Security Council action without fatal damage to their own prestige in counter-proliferation policy.
- **Encourage Japan to tighten its economic pressure on North Korea.** Tokyo has already placed economic pressure on the North Koreans. The Administration should ask Tokyo and other North Korean trading partners to quietly step up their efforts.
- **Move ahead with proliferation security exercises near North Korea.** A demonstrated capability to monitor and, if appropriate, interdict suspicious North Korean vessels will gain China’s attention. Eleven friends and allies have joined President George W. Bush’s Proliferation Security Initiative and will conduct interdiction exercises over the coming months. These drills will further demonstrate the resolve of the 11 nations to contain North Korea’s nuclear threat.

## CHINA’S INTERESTS

**China’s Role in America’s Search for a Negotiated Settlement.** Despite kind words in public for

China, U.S. negotiators are well aware that Beijing is not on Washington’s side—or even neutral—in the North Korean nuclear debate. America insists on multilateral talks on the North Korean issue, preferably in the United Nations. China wants direct bilateral talks between Washington and Pyongyang.

Thus far, the Bush Administration has been firm in maintaining that talks with North Korea must be multilateral. North Korea’s nuclear weapons program threatens all of North Korea’s neighbors, particularly Japan, and violates several international obligations and commitments. Pyongyang, however, demands bilateral talks with Washington because it does not want to admit to its people that the international community sees the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) as an outcast. Pyongyang seeks legitimacy for its nuclear weapons by painting the nuclear issue as something that is of concern only to the United States and rationalizes them as necessitated by a nuclear threat from the U.S. Additionally, the image of doughty North Korea forcing the world’s sole superpower into direct talks would be a powerful domestic propaganda tool for a regime whose legitimacy is fraying.

In this debate, Beijing supports Pyongyang’s position. Earlier in the year, China extracted an assurance from State Department policy planning director Richard Haass that Beijing could offer Pyongyang “bilateral” talks in Beijing with the Chinese serving only as “hosts” so that, in Washington, the Americans could sell the talks as “multilateral” U.S.–China–North Korean talks.<sup>1</sup> On April 23, 2003, China provided a venue for bilateral talks between American and North Korean representatives under a “compromise” arrangement that met Pyongyang’s demands for face-to-face talks.

During these talks, however, Beijing was not neutral. Chinese diplomats consistently took Pyongyang’s side by referring to the meetings as a “dialogue” and resolutely avoided any hint that the sessions were supposed to be “multilateral.”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, despite declaring that the “Chinese side stands for the denuclearization on the peninsula,” China’s

1. John Pomfret, “U.S. Envoy Opens Talks with N. Korea, China Included in Discussions on Nuclear Crisis, No Breakthrough Expected,” *The Washington Post*, April 24, 2003, p. A18, at [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A27379-2003Apr23.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A27379-2003Apr23.html).

consistent position on North Korea's explicit threats to develop nuclear weapons remains that:

1. China has no information that North Korea is actually developing nuclear weapons,<sup>3</sup>
2. China will not criticize North Korea's statements that it is developing nuclear weapons, and
3. The United States must tend to North Korea's needs. "[A]t the same time [as U.S. nuclear concerns are discussed], the legitimate security concern of the DPRK side should be cared for."<sup>4</sup>

The April 23 talks in Beijing failed when, in a direct confrontation with U.S. negotiator James Kelly, North Korean negotiator Ri Gun threatened to "demonstrate or transfer" some nuclear weapons that his country had already developed and demanded that the United States open diplomatic relations, provide aid, and sign a security pact. Ri Gun even demanded that Tokyo also recognize Pyongyang and provide massive economic aid. Kelly immediately broke off talks and returned to Washington.<sup>5</sup>

China's official media criticized the "U.S.'s tough moves against Pyongyang" that "can only intensify the contradiction and could not gain the support from the majority of the international community."<sup>6</sup> In articles published in the country's most prestigious international affairs journal, two senior Chinese academics declared that the United States "often makes up and spreads some news" about North Korea's nuclear program, and explained that Washington had three reasons to do so:

1. To derail improving ties between North Korea and Japan and keep Korea divided and under American "control,"
2. "To use its strength to bully the weak," and
3. "To find an excuse to quicken its pace on the deployment of MD [missile defense] system."<sup>7</sup>

In high-level meetings with the United States in July, Beijing continued to act as Pyongyang's advocate. On July 16, 2003, the Chinese strongly supported North Korea's demands that Washington guarantee the survival of the Kim Jong-Il regime.<sup>8</sup>

2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Press Conference on April 24, 2003," at [www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/47728.html](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/47728.html).
3. Despite North Korea's public admissions of a nuclear weapons program, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman continues to deny their validity, at one point saying that, "according to what I know, the DPRK side has not made such statement in the talks." See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Press Conference on April 29, 2003," at [www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/47886.html](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/47886.html). At the Bush–Jiang summit in October 2002, a reporter asked Chinese President Jiang Zemin for China's assessment of North Korea's nuclear program. Jiang answered, "We are completely in the dark, as for the recent development." See "Remarks by the President and Chinese President Jiang Zemin in Press Conference Bush Ranch at Crawford, Texas," at [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/print/20021025.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/print/20021025.html).
4. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Press Conference on April 29, 2003." This position held true through every Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's press conference, the most recent (as of the time this paper was written) being on July 3, 2003, at [www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/52416.html](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/52416.html).
5. Conversations with Bush Administration officials. The outline of the demands was also reported in the press; see Carla Anne Robbins, "North Korea Says It May Expand Nuclear Arsenal: Talks Break Off," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 25, 2003, at [online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB105118444242779300,00.html](http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB105118444242779300,00.html).
6. Sun Cheng, "Tough Moves Get Nuke Issue Nowhere," *China Daily*, July 12–13, 2003, p. 4.
7. Chinese academics also say the U.S. policy toward North Korea is the work of "hard-line hawks" in the Bush Administration and praise the "realistic...DPRK policy of the Clinton Administration." See Xu Xianzhong, "An Interpretation of the So-Called 'New North Korea Nuclear Issue'," and Lu Guangye, "DPRK Nuclear Issue: A Solution Can Be Worked Out Eventually," *International Strategic Studies* (Beijing), Vol. 69, No. 3 (July 2003). *International Strategic Studies* is published by the China Institute for International Strategic Studies, a research arm of the Military Intelligence Department of the Chinese General Staff.
8. Reuters Tokyo, "N. Korea May Accept Multilateral Talks—Report," July 16, 2003. Reuters cited a *Tokyo Shimbun* report that Chinese diplomats told their U.S. counterparts on July 8 that Pyongyang "would be ready to accept five-nation talks if a promise was made to guarantee (the survival of) the regime."

There was another reason that Beijing resisted broadening the talks—the Chinese were not keen on being outvoted in any multilateral talks and lobbied heavily to keep Washington's contacts with Pyongyang strictly within Beijing's ambit. In late July, the Chinese even tried to keep Japan out of the talks by telling the South Koreans:

North Korea considers it illogical to see Japan, which has invaded the Korean peninsula and colonized it, getting involved in the Korean peninsula affairs.... China is generally in support of North Korea's such position of opposing Japan's taking part.<sup>9</sup>

In their Washington talks, however, neither Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo nor his colleague, Vice Minister Wang Yi, tried to rule out Japanese participation.

But if Japan was to be included in the talks, China needed another partner to support Pyongyang. In this regard, it is significant that Vice Minister Dai visited both Pyongyang and Moscow before coming to Washington at the end of July to press the United States for direct bilateral negotiations with North Korea.

Russia's announcement on July 31 that it would join six-party talks in Beijing was accompanied by a firm statement of support for Pyongyang's demands. Indeed, as late as August 11, 2003, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov declared:

[W]e and our Chinese colleagues agree that positive movement toward disarmament on the peninsula is possible only in the case of parallel actions by the main participants in negotiations. The situation when only one side imposes conditions is counter-productive and leads to a deadlock.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, the United States must make "parallel" concessions to North Korea before North Korea actually dismantles its nuclear program.

The effect of six-party talks is likely to be a negotiating deadlock, with the United States and Japan (and possibly South Korea) facing China, Russia, and North Korea *en bloc*. Since neither China nor Russia has shown any interest in using the leverage of U.N. sanctions on North Korea, there is no prospect that these countries will break ranks with North Korea in multilateral talks in Beijing, especially when they all expect to force Washington into extended, direct bilateral negotiations with Pyongyang on the margins of the Beijing talks. Clearly, the State Department is also prepared for this.<sup>11</sup>

In the short term, China will continue to urge the United States to engage North Korea directly in the hope that the U.S. will resume the burden of food and fuel aid and will add broader "security guarantees" for the survival of the Kim Jong-Il regime.<sup>12</sup>

**Beijing's Strategic Interests in North Korea.** China sees benefits in keeping the North Korean government afloat despite the DPRK's disturbing human rights record, its refusal to implement economic reforms, and the dangers that North Korea's nuclear program poses to Chinese interests in Northeast Asia. China may prefer to have a divided Korean nation on its border rather than a united, industrialized, wealthy, and militarized Korea—much less a united Korea with irredentist claims to 20,000 square miles of Chinese territory in the Paektusan mountain region.

In the short run, China also fears that the fall of the Pyongyang regime would push tens, if not hundreds of thousands, of North Korean refugees into China.<sup>13</sup> In the longer term, Beijing may foresee a major American military presence in a unified Korea as an even less appetizing prospect for a country that lost nearly a million soldiers in the Korean War in an

9. Yonhap News Agency, Seoul, July 18, 2003, cited in "China Echoes N. Korea's Opposition to Japan's Role," Nautilus Institute NAPSNet Daily Report, at [www.nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0307/JUL18-03.html#item25](http://www.nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0307/JUL18-03.html#item25).

10. See "China and Russia Expect Tricky N. Korea Talks," Reuters News Service, August 11, 2003.

11. State Department spokesman Richard A. Boucher told reporters on August 6, 2003, that "there are ways in that multilateral setting, whether it's across the table or on the side or some other way, that any party can convey to another party directly what it wants to say." U.S. Department of State, daily briefing, August 6, 2003 (emphasis added).

12. For a discussion of China's economic burden in North Korea, see "Only China Keeps Things Going," *The Economist*, May 1, 2003, at [www.economist.com/printedition/displayStory.cfm?Story\\_ID=1748577](http://www.economist.com/printedition/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=1748577).



effort to keep U.S. troops away from China's borders.

There is also evidence that China believes that a nuclear-armed North Korea will complicate America's strategic calculus. As Dr. Chu Shulong, a senior Chinese strategist associated with the Ministry of State Security, explained to a *Washington Post* reporter, "as long as the U.S. is fighting terrorism, China will not be the focus of U.S. concerns."<sup>14</sup>

In March 2002, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Carl Levin (D-MI) questioned Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet about China's continued exports of missile technology to Iran, Libya, and North Korea. Tenet stated that Chinese activities "continue to be inimical not just to our interests, but that their activity stimulates secondary activities that only complicate the threat that we face, our forces face and our allies face, particularly in the Middle East," and added that "in some instances these activities are condoned by the government." When Senator Levin pressed Tenet to conclude "that China's either with us or against us in the war on terrorism," Tenet hedged that the Chinese "have actually attempted to be very cooperative in this regard," but finally sighed that "it's a mixed bag, and they're not."<sup>15</sup>

More distressing is China's adamant public denial that it believes North Korea even has a weapons program despite evidence that China's own intelligence services assume the North does.<sup>16</sup> China therefore has a keen interest in dissuading North

Korea from testing a nuclear device. As long as China can continue to deny that it supports North Korea's weapons programs, Beijing may be able to live with a nuclear North.

**Beijing's Real Position on a Non-nuclear North Korea.** As of July 21, 2003, Chinese diplomats continued to argue Pyongyang's case in Washington, but there is little indication that the Chinese actually made any attempt to advocate Washington's case in Pyongyang. Quite the opposite, in fact: In early July 2003, Wu Donghe, China's ambassador to Pyongyang, seemingly praised the North Korean leader for his firmness in the crisis by declaring that "the party, the army and the people of the DPRK single-heartedly rallied around leader Kim Jong Il are making a dynamic advance *despite all difficulties*..."<sup>17</sup>

On July 11, the 42nd anniversary of the Sino-North Korean alliance, a vice chairman of China's parliament declared that the governments of China and the DPRK have "pushed ahead with their cause of socialist construction" and have "made important contributions to defending the peace and stability of China and Korea *and, furthermore, in the rest of the world, closely cooperating with each other in the international arena*."<sup>18</sup> These are hardly words Chinese leaders would use if they thought North Korea was *not* defending peace and stability in the world. To prove the Chinese government's goodwill toward Pyongyang, Beijing gave 10,000 tons of diesel oil to the DPRK on July 16.<sup>19</sup>

13. For a more detailed discussion of China's view of Korea, see John J. Tkacik, Jr., "China's Korean Conundrum," *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, December 2, 2002, p. 19, at [online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB1038779097177816673.djm,00.html](http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB1038779097177816673.djm,00.html).

14. John Pomfret, "New Direction for Chinese Diplomacy Nuclear Threat in North Korea Prompts Ambitious Moves Toward Multilateralism," *The Washington Post*, August 16, 2003, p. A17, at [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A1356-2003Aug15.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A1356-2003Aug15.html).

15. George Tenet in hearing, *Worldwide Threat to U.S. Interests*, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, March 19, 2002.

16. *The Wall Street Journal* reported on July 18, 2003, that "Chinese intelligence services have concluded in recent weeks that North Korea is producing weapons-grade plutonium in sufficient quantities and has all the necessary components to assemble nuclear-tipped missiles." Charles Hutzler, "China Says Pyongyang Has Material for Bomb," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 18, 2003, at [online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB1058425100642300,00.html](http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB1058425100642300,00.html).

17. Korean Central News Agency, "Chinese Ambassador Gives Reception," July 11, 2003, at [www.kcna.co.jp/item/2003/200307/news07/12.htm#4](http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2003/200307/news07/12.htm#4) (emphasis added).

18. Korean Central News Agency, "Chinese Senior Officials on Sino-Korean Relations," July 11, 2003, at [www.kcna.co.jp/item/2003/200307/news07/14.htm#4](http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2003/200307/news07/14.htm#4) (emphasis added).

19. Korean Central News Agency, "Chinese Government to Donate Diesel Oil to DPRK," July 16, 2003, [www.kcna.co.jp/item/2003/200307/news07/17.htm#10](http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2003/200307/news07/17.htm#10).

This recent flurry of Chinese solicitude toward Pyongyang took place just as Vice Foreign Ministers Wang Yi and Dai Bingguo shuttled between Washington, Moscow, Pyongyang, and Beijing in mid-July 2003. While the Chinese envoys evinced concern about Pyongyang, they did not indicate a willingness to address Washington's concerns about the potential export of North Korean nuclear weapons to rogue states or terrorist organizations. Instead, they insist that Washington sit down and discuss Pyongyang's "legitimate security concerns" face to face, with the Chinese possibly facilitating bilateral talks in Beijing.

**China's Refusal to Use Its Leverage on North Korea.** Washington policymakers must not take China's claims to only limited leverage with the DPRK at face value. If China is seriously committed to eliminating nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula, it does indeed have the economic clout to rein in North Korea.

Pyongyang is totally dependent on imported petroleum for vehicle fuel and refined products. In the summer of 1996, Beijing agreed to provide the DPRK with annual shipments of 1.3 million tons of oil and 2.5 million tons of coal for the next five years—all *gratis*.<sup>20</sup> During its economic crisis of 1998, the DPRK imported only 609,000 tons of crude oil, of which 83 percent came from China.<sup>21</sup> Since then, China has been said to provide 90 percent of North Korea's oil, with the balance coming from Iran and Libya as payment for North Korean military equipment, raw materials, and technology.

Evidence that China knows it has such leverage came in March 2003 when Chinese academics leaked news stories that the China–North Korea oil pipeline across the Yalu River had been interrupted. One report alleged:

Beijing gradually shut down fourteen out of fifteen pipelines transporting heavy fuel oil from China to North Korea in the course of the past year, with even the last operational pipeline having reportedly been taken out of service for technical maintenance for three days last February.<sup>22</sup>

The Chinese government denied these reports of pipeline service interruptions, and U.S. government intelligence agencies had no evidence that the cutoff took place.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, there was no evidence that North Korea was chastened by the Chinese action, and still less that the event was intended as a political gesture. A more logical explanation is that the pipeline did, in fact, suffer technical difficulties and that the Chinese government used the incident in a whispering campaign to convince Americans of its unavailing efforts with the North Koreans.

Shortly after the putative "cutoff," North Korean jet fighters escalated tensions with the United States by attempting to force down an American reconnaissance plane in the Sea of Japan. Within a month, the North Koreans test-fired a short-range missile into the Yellow Sea between the Korean peninsula and China in an action described by *The Washington Post* as "the latest of a string of military provocations that have raised tensions in Asia."<sup>24</sup> Soon after the tests,

20. See "Energy Imports Gathering Steam," in Nicholas Eberstadt, *Statistical Blackouts in North Korea: Trade Figures Uncovered* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, March 1998), at [www.worldbank.org/transitionnewsletter/marapr98/pgs21-23.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/transitionnewsletter/marapr98/pgs21-23.htm).

21. See Jong Hoon Kim, "Overview of the DPRK's energy industry," *International Market Insight*, December 18, 2000, produced by the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service Office at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, South Korea. Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John R. Bolton said, "I don't think there's any question that China's influence... is substantial, given that it supplies between 70% and 90% of North Korea's fuel needs, and provides substantial additional humanitarian assistance as well. That's a point we've made in our discussions with China many times." John R. Bolton, "Press Conference on U.S.–China Security Dialogue," Beijing, China, July 28, 2003 at [www.state.gov/t/us/rm/22917.htm](http://www.state.gov/t/us/rm/22917.htm).

22. Alexandre Y. Mansourov, "North Korea Is Poised to Cross the Nuclear Rubicon: Will the Canary Die in the Mine?" *Nautilus Institute*, April 23, 2003, at [www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0330\\_Mansourov.html](http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0330_Mansourov.html).

23. See Benjamin Kang Lim, "China Appears to Be Trying to Rein in North Korea," *Reuters*, Beijing, March 31, 2003. U.S. government sources denied privately to the author that any evidence of the shutoff existed separately from the unattributed reports in the Western media.

24. Todd Zaun, "U.S. Planes, Troops Will Stay in South Korea After Exercises," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 2, 2003, at [online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB1049185840164916280,00.html](http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB1049185840164916280,00.html).

North Korean diplomats in New York warned American counterparts that the DPRK had “successfully completed the reprocessing” of spent fuel rods into plutonium.<sup>25</sup>

**China as the DPRK’s “Nuclear Enabler.”** In October 2002, the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Washington Times*, and *Wall Street Journal* published separate articles alleging that China was, directly or indirectly, complicit in the transfer of Pakistani uranium-enrichment technology to North Korea.<sup>26</sup> In fact, China has been North Korea’s nuclear enabler for over a decade. Even in 2003, Beijing continues to supply North Korean laboratories with the chemicals to separate plutonium from spent fuel.<sup>27</sup> The Chinese government also continues to permit North Korean aircraft to overfly Chinese airspace to deliver missile, nuclear, and chemical contraband to Iran and elsewhere.<sup>28</sup>

China’s pervasive involvement in North Korean weapons exports dates back to the early 1990s when North Korea became a Chinese client state.<sup>29</sup> When Russian aid ceased in 1992, North Korea began to leverage its nuclear weapons program to

renew its friendship with China. Beijing then became Pyongyang’s primary patron for the first time since the Korean War. During the 1990s, Chinese food and fuel aid to North Korea imposed a financial burden on the Beijing government. This caused China to welcome—and perhaps even encourage—Pyongyang’s use of its nuclear weapons program in negotiations to gain economic aid from the United States, South Korea, and Japan, leading up to the 1994 Agreed Framework accords with Washington.<sup>30</sup>

Even so, massive amounts of Western food and energy aid were insufficient to counteract the absolute refusal of North Korea’s leaders to consider economic reforms. The nation’s economy contracted dramatically between 1994 and 1999, and as many as 2.5 million North Koreans starved to death in the resulting famines.<sup>31</sup>

## WASHINGTON’S LEVERAGE

**Why Washington Must Maintain the Pressure.** Despite China’s clear support for North Korea in the ongoing nuclear controversy, there is a Polly-

25. See two versions of this at Glenn Kessler, “U.S. Officials Spar Over N. Korea; State Dept. Says Nuclear Claim Was ‘Shared Appropriately,’” *The Washington Post*, April 27, 2003, p. A11, at [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A42441-2003Apr26.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A42441-2003Apr26.html), and Danny Gittings, “Debate in Beijing,” *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, April 29, 2003, at [online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB105157426179005100,00.html](http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB105157426179005100,00.html).
26. Shirley Kan, “China and Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Missiles: Policy Issues,” Congressional Research Service *Issues Brief*, updated February 26, 2003, at [fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/18223.pdf](http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/18223.pdf). In addition to articles cited in her footnote 10, see also Glenn Kessler, “Pakistan’s N. Korea Deals Stir Scrutiny, Aid to Nuclear Arms Bid May Be Recent,” *The Washington Post*, November 13, 2002, p. A1; Bill Gertz, “North Korea Can Build Nukes Right Now,” *The Washington Times*, November 22, 2002, p. A1; and David E. Sanger, “In North Korea and Pakistan, Deep Roots of Nuclear Barter,” *The New York Times*, November 24, 2002, p. A1, at [www.nytimes.com/2002/11/24/international/asia/24KORE.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/24/international/asia/24KORE.html).
27. Bill Gertz, “CIA Shifts on North Korean Nukes,” *The Washington Times*, July 4, 2003, at [www.washingtontimes.com/national/20030703-114656-2535r.htm](http://www.washingtontimes.com/national/20030703-114656-2535r.htm).
28. John J. Tkacik, Jr., “Decision Day Looms over North Korea,” *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 2003, at [online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB105839894625819400,00.html](http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB105839894625819400,00.html).
29. Kan, “China and Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Missiles.”
30. Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas* (Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley, 1997), p. 320. Oberdorfer’s account of events also paints Beijing as using the North Korea issue to gain leverage on the Clinton Administration to continue most favored nation (MFN) trading status with China. According to Oberdorfer, Clinton’s “delinking” of MFN from China’s human rights behavior “made it more attractive and politically acceptable for Chinese leaders to cooperate” on the North Korean nuclear issue. The most China was prepared to do on Washington’s behalf was abstain on a U.N. Security Council sanctions resolution. There is little evidence that China had any stomach for a veto in any event, and no evidence that Clinton was prepared to terminate China’s MFN status.
31. Andrew Natsios, administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development, estimates that as many as 2.5 million DPRK citizens may have died of famine and other causes under the DPRK’s repressive regime. Jane A. Morse, “Conference Focuses on North Korean Human Rights Abuses: National Endowment for Democracy Looks at the DPRK Gulag,” *Washington File*, July 17, 2003, at [usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2003/Jul/18-646117.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2003/Jul/18-646117.html).

anna-like tendency to view China as “helpful” in the North Korea nuclear controversy. Policymakers both in the Administration and on Capitol Hill should instead view China’s role in this matter strictly as a function of its own self-interest. On July 13, 2003, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice observed that “the Chinese have been very helpful, because it’s in the Chinese interest to be helpful.”<sup>32</sup>

The challenge for Washington is to get China to see that it shares an interest with the U.S. in denuclearizing North Korea, even though China’s reasoning in reaching that conclusion may differ profoundly from America’s. China will be inclined to become even more helpful if there are alternative pressure points that the United States can grip, such as:

1. A determined move in the U.N. Security Council aimed ultimately at a full economic embargo on the DPRK and
2. An international campaign to halt North Korea’s illicit drug, counterfeit, and smuggling operations by cooperating with jurisdictions at the ports-of-call of North Korean shipping.

#### **United Nations Security Council Sanctions.**

North Korea’s behavior is undeniably amenable to United Nations sanctions. On July 18, 2003, Mohammed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), declared that, “in my view, the situation in the DPRK is currently the most immediate and most serious threat to the nuclear nonproliferation regime.” ElBaradei’s warning suddenly heightened the probability that the U.N. Security Council could eventually be pressed into formal economic sanctions against Pyongyang.

As in 1994, China and North Korea are unlikely to respond to demands for Pyongyang’s nuclear disarmament unless they are faced with a determined

U.N. campaign for sanctions. Washington has a significant base in the Security Council on which it can build. In early 2003, while locked in opposition with the United States at the height of the Iraq debate, France “condemned” North Korea’s actions and declared that North Korea’s transgressions “needed” Security Council attention.<sup>33</sup>

A vigorous debate in the Security Council led by the United States, France, and the United Kingdom would oblige China and Russia to take a public stance on their commitment (or lack thereof) to nonproliferation. In 1994, China warned North Korea that it could not risk damaging its international image by vetoing U.N. sanctions if Pyongyang refused to denuclearize.

In 2003, U.N. sanctions could come in stages, with a preliminary statement of condemnation from the Security Council president in response to the IAEA’s concerns, followed by a formal Security Council resolution under Chapter 6 of the U.N. Charter (peaceful resolution of disputes), and ultimately leading to a Chapter 7 resolution (threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression) and sanctions. Staged sanctions begin with a first phase banning financial remittances from North Koreans living abroad to their families back home, halting all military shipments in and out of North Korea, and terminating U.N. economic cooperation with the country. A second phase would mean a full trade embargo.<sup>34</sup> The South Korean and Japanese governments are now reportedly in agreement with the United States that the U.N. Security Council should adopt a statement denouncing the DPRK for its suspected nuclear weapons development if it does not agree to conduct multilateral talks.<sup>35</sup>

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Administration and Congress should:

32. Condoleezza Rice, “Transcript: Condoleezza Rice on Fox News Sunday,” *Fox News Sunday*, July 13, 2003, at [www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,91780,00.html](http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,91780,00.html).
33. M. Dominique de Villepin, “North Korea: Interview Given During His Visit to China,” excerpts, Beijing, January 10, 2003, at [www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/actu/bulletin.gb.asp?liste=20030110.gb.html&submit.x=3&submit.y=6#Chapitre3](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/actu/bulletin.gb.asp?liste=20030110.gb.html&submit.x=3&submit.y=6#Chapitre3).
34. For a longer discussion of possible U.N. sanctions strategies, see John Tkacik, Jr., “Sanctions Against North Korea,” *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, January 13, 2003, at [online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB1042408068960458424,00.html](http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB1042408068960458424,00.html).
35. Kanako Takahara, “UNSC May Be Brought in on North Korea: Japan, U.S., South Korea Agree to Act If Pyongyang Won’t Return to Talks,” *Japan Times*, July 16, 2003.



- **Prepare for sharp differences at the upcoming Beijing talks.** Senior policymakers should admit that China and Russia do not share America's interests in denuclearizing the Korean peninsula. If the multilateral talks in Beijing fail, they must immediately push to take the matter to the U.N. Security Council and, with French and British support, be prepared to challenge both Chinese and Russian commitments to nonproliferation. A Security Council resolution is the first step to achieving credible international economic sanctions on North Korea.
- **Prepare for the worst in the Korean peninsula.** Since North Korea refused to abandon its nuclear weapons program in the past despite billions of dollars in aid, there is little hope that it will do so for pieces of paper containing American security guarantees—even guarantees to preserve the Kim Jong-Il regime. Given the virtual impossibility of a peaceful termination of North Korea's nuclear weapons program, the only alternatives will involve escalating levels of economic and/or military pressure.
- **Encourage Japan to tighten its economic pressure on North Korea.** Ironically, Tokyo has been even firmer than Washington in stepping up economic pressure on the North Koreans.

Yet there is still much room to constrict North Korea's access to hard currency, advanced electronics, and other strategic components that it desires for its military. The Administration should ask Tokyo and other DPRK trading partners to quietly step up the pressure.

- **Move ahead with proliferation security exercises near North Korea.** Demonstration of a capability to monitor and, if appropriate, interdict suspicious North Korean vessels will gain China's attention. Eleven friends and allies have joined the Proliferation Security Initiative announced by President Bush in Warsaw on May 31, 2003. The 11 are prepared to interdict international shipments of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems and have agreed to conduct interdiction exercises for the next several months under their authority as flag states, coastal states, and trans-shipment states. Interdiction drills will be held in waters near Japan and South Korea in September. These drills will further demonstrate the 11 nations' resolve to contain North Korea's nuclear threat.

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