

Background

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America's North Korea Policy: Adding Lanes to the Road

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Of all the foreign policy challenges that Barack Obama inherited from George W. Bush, North Korea may prove the most intractable. Perceptions held by many South Koreans—and many in American academic circles—that President Obama would take a dramatically different approach toward Pyongyang, including an embrace of direct summit diplomacy, raised unrealistic expectations for a sea change in the U.S. strategy for North Korean denuclearization. Similarly, many also interpreted North Korea's abstention from criticizing the United States in its authoritative New Year's Day editorial¹ as a preliminary signal that Pyongyang was reaching out to Washington.

At this early point in the new U.S. Administration, there appear to be no breakthroughs on the horizon. There are no easy answers to the problem of North Korea's continuing nuclear program. Neither the confrontational approach of the first six years of the Bush Administration nor the virtually unconditional engagement strategy of the final two Bush years achieved success.

The Six-Party Talks should continue, but should not be the only venue through which the U.S. engages North Korea. The U.S. may achieve greater success by changing the paradigm through adding additional lanes to the North Korea policy road. In implementing an expanded policy, the U.S. should integrate a comprehensive diplomatic approach with accompanying pressure, and should closely coordinate with allies South Korea and Japan. Leverage could be derived from energetically enforcing existing multilateral

Talking Points

- Despite public perceptions of a major U.S. policy shift toward North Korea, President Obama is continuing the Bush engagement strategy. During its last two years, the Bush Administration engaged in the direct, bilateral diplomacy with Pyongyang that President Obama advocates, yet there was continued North Korean intransigence, non-compliance, and brinksmanship.
- The U.S. should continue diplomatic attempts to reduce North Korea's nuclear threat, employing all instruments of national power, including energetic enforcement of existing multilateral sanctions, expanding the Proliferation Security Initiative, and demanding compliance with hard-won U.N. Security Council resolutions.
- The Six-Party Talks should not be the only venue for U.S.–North Korean engagement. Washington should transform the policy paradigm by, among other things, adding lanes to the negotiating road, including missile talks.
- A more comprehensive strategy would offer Pyongyang a path to greater economic and diplomatic benefits while continuing to insist on compliance, conditionality, reciprocity, and verification.

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sanctions, expanding the Proliferation Security Initiative, and demanding compliance with hard-fought U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Prudence demands that all concerned parties remember the broken promises and shattered dreams that litter the Korean landscape. Kim Jong-il has shown great reluctance to make concessions or achieve real progress on diplomatic agreements with the United States or his neighbors. Pyongyang has repeatedly dashed the hopes of those advocating engagement. Perceived movement is habitually followed by threats, cancellations, and demands.

Nuclear negotiations are currently in a stalemate because North Korea rejects a verification protocol the Bush Administration claimed Pyongyang had previously accepted. Pyongyang's response—the vitriolic attacks and near-severing of relations when South Korea and Japan merely stipulated conditionality and reciprocity—bodes ill for those who hope that North Korea will accept future requirements arising from the Six-Party Talks.

The problem with North Korea's nuclear weapons program must be viewed as being embedded in the deeper problem the regime poses to the international system. What makes the problem so intractable and dangerous is the nature of the North Korean regime. Its self-imposed isolation, its horrid human rights record, its easily stirred state of belligerency toward South Korea, the massive conventional forces it maintains on the edge of the demilitarized zone (DMZ), and its record of missile and nuclear technology proliferation gives a chilling context to the nuclear threat.

Of course, the United States' number one priority regarding the Korean peninsula must be the denuclearization of the North. But that must be part of a broader approach that addresses the entire set of problems posed by the regime.

North Korea's Nuclear Strategy

Pyongyang has historically shown itself to be patient during U.S. leadership transitions, parsing the selection of Administration officials and their statements for indications of potential policy

changes. North Korea typically first seeks to attain its goals through formal and informal diplomatic means, manipulating multiple parallel channels of engagement, and playing one opponent against the other to gain negotiating leverage.

Despite welcoming Barack Obama's election, North Korea resorted to brinkmanship tactics after indications that the new U.S. Administration would not be as conciliatory as Pyongyang had anticipated. During his confirmation hearing, nominated Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn called Pyongyang a continuing threat, while during her hearing, nominated Secretary of State Hillary Clinton affirmed the U.S. would continue to demand the complete and verifiable denuclearization of North Korea.

In an attempt to influence the formulation of the Obama Administration's North Korea policy, North Korea asserted in mid-January that it would denuclearize only after the establishment of formal diplomatic relations with the U.S., the cessation of Washington's "hostile policy," and the removal of the U.S. protective nuclear umbrella over South Korea. Pyongyang has not defined the objectionable components of the U.S. approach, but it could include cessation of joint U.S.–South Korean military exercises, downsizing or removal of U.S. Forces Korea, a formal non-aggression pact, or abrogation of the U.S.–South Korean alliance.

Some analysts will dismiss the North Korean missive as simply "negotiating through headlines." Instead, the statements should be interpreted as a shot across the bow of the Obama Administration. Such statements are consistent with numerous remarks by North Korean officials that Pyongyang has little interest in abandoning its nuclear weapons. The rhetoric reflects standard North Korean negotiating tactics of raising the ante, deflecting criticism of its own noncompliance by blaming U.S. actions, insisting on equality of conditions in response to unequal violations, and renegotiating the existing agreement.

On a tactical negotiating level, Pyongyang seeks to undermine the U.S. push for a rigorous verifica-

1. "Joint New Year Editorial Issued," KCNA, January 1, 2009, at <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2009/200901/news01/20090101-02ee.html> (March 17, 2009).

tion accord by demanding North Korean inspectors in South Korean and U.S. military facilities as well as on U.S. ships and submarines. On a more strategic level, North Korea sent a clear signal that it will not adopt a more accommodating stance post-Bush. Contrary to the unrealistically high expectations that the new Obama Administration will be able to achieve dramatic acceleration in North Korean denuclearization and an improvement in U.S.–North Korean relations, the Six-Party Talks will continue to have a tumultuous future.

Isolating the U.S. from Its Asian Allies. North Korea has long sought to drive a wedge between the U.S. and its Asian allies. North Korea tries to appeal to the South Korean populace by blaming the U.S. troop presence and joint military exercises as the principal impediments to peaceful Korean reunification. North Korea has engaged in an all-out effort to demonize the South's Lee Myung-bak government, blaming it for escalating inter-Korean tensions.

In its effort to undermine domestic support for President Lee, Pyongyang restricted South Korean access to the Gungang joint economic zone, unleashed witheringly harsh rhetoric against President Lee and his principled policy toward the North, abrogated all inter-Korean agreements, threatened military confrontation in the West Sea, and warned of imminent war between the Koreas.

President Lee vowed to maintain South Korea's engagement policy toward the North, but conditioned economic, humanitarian, and political benefits on concrete progress toward denuclearization and North Korean implementation of political and economic reforms. Lee's policy is more consistent with the Six-Party Talks goal of using coordinated multilateral diplomatic measures to push for Pyongyang's implementation of its nuclear commitments.

North Korea also seeks to exclude Japan from the Six-Party Talks, accusing Tokyo of being an impediment to progress. Tokyo has conditioned the establishment of formal diplomatic relations and providing Japanese assistance in the nuclear negoti-

ations on resolving uncertainties over the fate of Japanese citizens kidnapped by North Korea during the 1970s and 1980s. Tokyo lost considerable negotiating power on the abductee issue when the U.S. prematurely removed North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism in October 2008 in return for a flawed verification protocol which Pyongyang later rejected.

This U.S. action angered Japan and led it to question U.S. willingness to address Japanese security concerns. Tokyo felt particularly betrayed by the Bush Administration's breaking of President Bush's personal pledge to keep North Korea on the terrorist list until progress was made on the abductee issue. National Security Council Senior Asia Director Dennis Wilder clearly stated in April 2007 that "We aren't going to de-link the abductee issue from the state sponsor of terrorism issue,"² and emphasized that President Bush would personally reaffirm that position to then-Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Playing the China Card. It has long been an article of faith among China watchers and U.S. policymakers that the road to Pyongyang runs through Beijing, meaning that the North Korean nuclear impasse could be resolved if only China made use of its considerable clout. During its first term, the Bush Administration deferred responsibility for North Korean denuclearization to China, repeatedly praising Beijing for its efforts.

North Korea's missile and nuclear tests in 2006, however, dramatically exposed China's inability or unwillingness to exercise significant influence over Pyongyang. This should not have come as a surprise since Beijing was previously unable to compel North Korea to give up either of its nuclear weapons programs, despite having identified it as a core strategic national interest of China. The Chinese leadership also failed to convince Kim Jong-il to implement Chinese-style economic reform, despite a decade of entreaties and aid to assist Pyongyang in transforming its economy.

2. Yonhap News Agency, "U.S. will not remove N. Korea from list of terror-sponsoring states: official," April 27, 2007, at <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1824427/posts> (June 26, 2008). Former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and former NSC Senior Asia Director Michael Green affirmed there was a clear linkage between the abductee and delisting issues.

Despite North Korea's provocations, China remains averse to confronting its recalcitrant neighbor for fear of provoking further escalatory behavior or triggering regime instability. China remains conflicted in its policy toward North Korea between those who advocate strong solidarity with Beijing's Communist ally and those pushing for improving relations with the U.S. by distancing itself from Pyongyang.

North Korea takes advantage of Beijing's position by using China as a buffer against international pressure tactics and to diffuse implementation of punitive measures, undercut U.S. policy, and constrain real progress in the Six-Party Talks. When confronted with North Korean stonewalling, Beijing repeatedly called upon the U.S. to show greater "flexibility," for example, to offer even more concessions.

Likelihood of Increased Tensions

If North Korea concludes it has been too long ignored or has not achieved its objectives through direct engagement, it will initiate a carefully calibrated escalation of tensions. Kim Jong-il will be emboldened by perceptions that Washington does not have a military option due to Seoul's proximity to the DMZ, the overextension of U.S. military forces, and a potential face-off with Iran.

Pyongyang typically signals its intent to engage in provocative behavior by increasing the bellicosity and authoritativeness of its official propaganda. Potential options include restarting operations at the Yongbyon nuclear reactor, prohibiting actions in the Joint Security Area, extensive out-of-cycle military training exercises near the DMZ or the maritime demarcation line in the West Sea, a long-range missile test, or preparations for a second nuclear test.

North Korea may conduct such actions in conjunction with diplomatic entreaties to gain additional concessions for returning to the *status quo*. Pyongyang could also choose to deflect attention from its noncompliance with denuclearization requirements by re-engaging South Korea or Japan or switching to another diplomatic venue such as offering to resume missile negotiations.

The Threatening Nature of the North Korean Regime

Although getting Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons programs has been a preeminent U.S. strategic objective, North Korea poses additional risks to its neighbors. North Korea has an estimated 600 Scud missiles that can reach any part of South Korea as well as 200 No-Dong missiles that can strike Japan. These missiles may be capable of delivering nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. North Korea has forward-deployed 70 percent of its ground forces within 90 miles of the DMZ. In addition to three conventional corps alongside the DMZ, Pyongyang has deployed two mechanized corps, an armor corps, and an artillery corps.

The North Korean government is actively engaged in a wide range of illegal activities, including counterfeiting of U.S. and other countries' currencies, money laundering, and production of illegal narcotics and counterfeit pharmaceuticals. The U.S. government and courts have identified North Korean complicity in manufacturing and distributing \$100 "super note" bills.

In 2005, the U.S. Treasury Department froze North Korean accounts in a Macau bank that were used for money laundering. Despite significantly hampering North Korean illicit activity, the Treasury Department was forced to back away from the enforcement of U.S. and international law in order to facilitate "progress" in the Six-Party Talks.

North Korea has one of the world's most brutal regimes, inflicting horrendous human rights abuses on its citizens. The Department of State cites arbitrary imprisonment, killings, torture, forced abortions, absence of religious freedom, and medical experimentation on prisoners.³ Pyongyang operates an extensive gulag system for as many as 200,000 political prisoners.

During 10 years of progressive leadership, South Korea was resistant to criticizing North Korea's human rights record out of concern it would undermine Seoul's engagement policy. The Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments were rightly casti-

3. U.S. Department of State, "Korea, Democratic People's Republic of," Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, March 11, 2008, at <http://www.state.gov/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100524.htm> (March 17, 2009).

gated by the U.S. and international community for turning a blind eye to the North Korean abuses and doing little to facilitate the movement of North Korean refugees into the South.

Uncertainties over Kim Jong-il's Health

Questions over the status of Kim Jong-il's health overshadow the Six-Party Talks as well as engagement with North Korea on a range of issues. It is likely that Kim suffered at least one stroke in late 2008 leading to at least partial debilitation. Pyongyang has since responded with a series of photos to convince the outside world the North Korean leader is healthy. Uncertainties remain because some, if not all, of the photos were doctored or are known to have been taken before his illness.

Because North Korea has not announced a formal succession plan, there are concerns of the implications of Kim's sudden death or incapacitation. While North Korean authorities may be ready to implement an existing plan, the outside world remains fearful of the potential for instability in a nuclear weapons state.

There has been great speculation over the years over Kim's potential successor, with the most likely candidates being one of Kim's three sons, his brother-in-law Chang Song-taek, or a collective leadership. Regardless of who is chosen, it is unlikely there will be any significant change in North Korea's resistance to economic and political reform or to more open engagement with the outside world. Nor would it be likely that Pyongyang would be less obstructionist during the Six-Party Talks.

The new leader, lacking the inherent legitimacy of Kim Jong-il or of his father Kim Il-song, would be heavily dependent on the leadership elite, who see their fate as directly tied to a continuation of the present regime. They would resist any attempt at altering policy as risking regime instability and

threatening their way of life. The new leader may have to pursue an even more hard-line policy to ensure continued internal support.

Obama's Approach to North Korea

President Obama has asserted the need for "sustained, direct, and aggressive diplomacy" with North Korea. He pledged to be "firm and unyielding in our commitment to a non-nuclear Korean peninsula," and vowed not to "take the military option off the table" in order to achieve "the complete and verifiable elimination of all of North Korea's nuclear weapons programs, as well as its past proliferation activities, including with Syria."⁴

He stated that "sanctions are a critical part of our leverage to pressure North Korea to act. They should only be lifted based on performance. If the North Koreans do not meet their obligations, we should move quickly to re-impose sanctions that have been waived, and consider new restrictions going forward."⁵ The Obama Administration's first official act toward North Korea was to impose new sanctions on three North Korean companies for violating a U.S. law aimed at curtailing the proliferation of technology related to missiles and weapons of mass destruction.⁶

Although there might be a perception of a major shift in U.S. policy, President Obama will maintain much of the engagement strategy of the final two years of the Bush Administration. Although President Obama may be more willing than was President Bush to engage in senior-level diplomatic engagement, including a potential summit with Kim Jong-il, it is unlikely that such tactical changes will achieve verifiable North Korean denuclearization. However direct he makes his policy, President Obama will face the same constraints in achieving tangible progress with North Korea as his predecessors experienced.

4. "Barack Obama and Joe Biden's Plan to Renew U.S. Leadership in Asia," BarackObama.com, 2007, at http://obama.3cdn.net/ef3d1c1c34cf996edf_s3w2mv24t.pdf (March 17, 2009).
5. Jonathan Ellis, "McCain and Obama on North Korea," *The Caucus*, June 26, 2008, at <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/06/26/mccain-and-obama-on-north-korea/?scp=1&sq=john%20mccain%20and%20obama%20on%20north%20korea&st=Search> (March 17, 2009).
6. "Shaky Start," *The Korea Times*, February 6, 2009, at http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2009/03/202_39094.html (March 19, 2009).

During its last two years, the Bush Administration engaged in the direct, bilateral diplomacy with Pyongyang that the Obama Administration advocates today. Yet there has been continued North Korean intransigence, non-compliance, and brinkmanship. The Bush engagement also resulted in the abandonment of important principles, including enforcement of international law and attaining sufficient verification measures. Nor have Six-Party Talks diplomats yet begun real negotiations on the elimination of North Korean nuclear weapons three years after Pyongyang agreed to do so.

Avoiding the Mistakes of the Past

As President Obama assembles his foreign-policy making team and translates vague campaign pronouncements to specific policy recommendations, he should look to history for guidance. This history clearly advises that he *avoid* several current recommendations made by a variety of American, South Korean, and Japanese experts. Specifically, the President should:

- **Not double down on a losing hand.** The limited action-for-action strategy of the Six-Party Talks has failed; therefore, some advocate expanding the rewards to offer North Korea an even larger deal. This is akin to urging a farmer who has lost every hand of poker against a wily dealer to go all in and bet his homestead in hopes of winning it all back—and more—on one hand.
- **Not put the cart before the horse.** Since Kim Jong-il makes all important decisions, some believe that the U.S. should propose a summit between Obama and Kim to avoid months of haggling by lower-level officials. This wishful thinking is reminiscent of the Clinton Administration, when a senior official stated, “If only we could get the President in the same room as Kim Jong-il, the force of Bill’s personality is so strong that we’d get all of our objectives!” A U.S.–North Korean summit without assurances of an extensive and thoroughly verifiable denuclearization agreement would be premature and counterproductive.
- **Not provide concessions to appease North Korean hardliners.** North Korean intransigence has been depicted as a short-term manifestation

of a hard-line faction. In this unlikely scenario, Kim Jong-il is really a closet capitalist who has somehow fallen under the influence of evil Korean “neocons.” This is despite ample evidence that Kim rules with an iron fist and tolerates no dissent. North Korean negotiators, like used-car salesmen, are always happy to promise to “work with you,” provided you cough up “just a few more” concessions to convince Kim that they have reached a good deal.

- **Not be ambiguous in order to achieve “progress.”** The Clinton and Bush Administrations both ran into trouble when they acquiesced to North Korean demands for vague text instead of clear requirements and timelines. Deferring rather than resolving issues provides a false sense of advancement and allows Pyongyang to exploit loopholes and avoid its denuclearization commitments.
- **Not sacrifice U.S. allies on the altar of denuclearization.** South Korea and Japan became increasingly suspicious of U.S. eagerness to achieve progress in Six-Party Talks regardless of the cost to the alliance. The Bush Administration’s premature removal of North Korea from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism and its unwillingness to integrate South Korean and Japanese security concerns into the Six-Party Talks strained bilateral relations.

What the U.S. Should Do

Getting Nuclear Negotiations Right. For the United States and its allies, addressing the North Korean nuclear threat must remain the paramount national security objective in Northeast Asia. As President Obama develops his approach to North Korea, the U.S. should:

- **Affirm that its objective is the complete and verifiable denuclearization of North Korea. President Obama should state unequivocally that Washington will not accept North Korea as a nuclear weapons state.** Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s confirmation-hearing testimony properly affirmed this goal, and also emphasized the requirements for complete and verifiable denuclearization as well as a full accounting by Pyongyang of its uranium-based nuclear weapons

program and proliferation activities. (Her subsequently expressed doubts about the existence of a North Korean uranium program were factually wrong and misguided.)

- **Develop, in conjunction with North Korea's neighbors, a strategic blueprint** clearly defining the desired end-state, objectives, and requirements for all parties, as well as a roadmap delineating the linkages, schedule, and metrics for achieving measurable results.
- **Insist that North Korea comply with its existing Six-Party Talks agreements** and not allow Pyongyang to use brinksmanship and threats to redefine the parameters of the negotiations. Existing North Korean requirements include: providing a data declaration on its nuclear weapons inventory, uranium weapons program, and proliferation activities; disabling all nuclear facilities; and accepting a sufficiently rigorous and intrusive verification protocol that meets international standards.
- **Require that subsequent Six-Party Talks joint statements are sufficiently detailed to prevent North Korea from exploiting loopholes** in order to avoid full compliance.
- **Resist being drawn into a debate over whether North Korea has made the "strategic decision" to give up its nuclear weapons.** Pyongyang has signed three Six-Party Talks agreements that commit it to full denuclearization. Washington must make clear that anything less than full compliance by North Korea constitutes a violation that puts Pyongyang into jeopardy of not receiving promised benefits.
- **Reject North Korean claims that the U.S.'s "hostile policy" is to blame for the Six-Party Talks impasse.** The President and Secretary of State should emphasize that U.S. Forces Korea is a direct response to North Korea's 1950 invasion of, and continued belligerent threats to, Seoul. The U.S. should insist that Pyongyang fully comply with its denuclearization commitments before initiating any discussions of conventional

force reductions or a peace treaty formally ending the Korean War.

- **Emphasize that North Korea's refusal of dialogue with Seoul and Tokyo prevents South Korea and Japan from providing economic and diplomatic benefits called for in the Six-Party Talks process** as well as preventing bilateral development assistance.
- **Strengthen its alliances with South Korea and Japan.** Washington should continue military realignment of its forces in Northeast Asia and continue to work toward broader strategic alliances with South Korea and Japan as well as ensuring close coordination of the policies of all parties in the Six-Party Talks.

Expanding Policy Beyond the Six-Party Talks

Despite their preeminent importance, the Six-Party Talks need not be, nor should be, the only focus of North Korea policy. There are other areas of concern, as well as other opportunities for transforming the North Korean regime:

Washington should adopt a comprehensive, integrated approach with Pyongyang by adding lanes to the policy road.

- **An extensive yet conditional approach** would be to offer Pyongyang a path to greater economic, developmental, and diplomatic benefits while still insisting on conditionality, reciprocity, and transparency. New initiatives should not be allowed to deflect attention from Pyongyang's denuclearization requirements.

Negotiating venues should be pursued bilaterally or multilaterally depending on their impact on a country's national interests.

- **Inter-Korean negotiations should be handled bilaterally by Seoul and Pyongyang** and be based on the 1991 Basic Agreement.⁷
- **The U.S., South Korea, and Japan should initiate multilateral negotiations to eliminate North Korea's missile threats to its neigh-**

7. Formally known as the "Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation Between South and North Korea."

bers. Such discussions should constrain, and ideally eliminate, missile development, deployment, and proliferation rather than being merely a *quid pro quo* agreement of cash payments in exchange for Pyongyang not exporting missile technology.

- **The U.S., China, North Korea, and South Korea could begin discussions on a peace treaty to formally end the Korean War** once North Korea's nuclear and missile threats to its neighbors are eliminated. An inviolable precondition for such negotiations would be the inclusion of conventional force reductions and confidence-building measures, such as prior notification of major military deployments, movements, and exercises.

Not all forms of engagement should be linked to the Six-Party Talks.

- **Humanitarian and development assistance should be divorced from the nuclear negotiations.** Levels of humanitarian aid should be determined following extensive in-country assessments of North Korean needs. Provision of humanitarian aid and development assistance should be subject to rigorous monitoring standards.
- **International development assistance should be subject to the standard rules of international financial institutions.** Initial contributions should be project-based while any extensive, long-term assistance should be tied to North Korean economic reform.
- **Law enforcement, implementation of U.N. resolutions, and efforts to combat proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles are not negotiable.** It was a grave mistake on the part of the Bush Administration to allow Pyongyang to dictate an abrogation of enforcing U.S. and international laws in exchange for North Korea's return to the Six-Party Talks.

The U.S. should denounce North Korea's human rights abuses and take steps to improve living conditions for its citizens. The U.S. should:

- **Challenge North Korea to improve its abysmal human rights record** through exposure at international fora, including at the U.N.;

- **Call on Beijing to abandon repatriation of North Korean defectors** and allow visits by the U.N. rapporteur on North Korean human rights to investigate refugee conditions in northeast China;
- **Engage with China, Mongolia, and Southeast Asian nations** to determine ways to facilitate travel by North Korean refugees;
- **Support Japanese and South Korean efforts to secure full accounting and return of all abductees and prisoners of war** currently languishing in North Korea; and
- **Condition establishment of diplomatic relations with North Korea on the introduction of a Helsinki Accord-type process** to ensure human rights improvements.

The U.S. should expand public diplomacy to promote greater exposure of North Korean officials and citizens to the outside world. Increased North Korean exposure to information is a useful long-term means to begin the transformation of the nature of the regime, as took place in Communist Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

- **Facilitate formal student and cultural exchange programs.**
- **Expand broadcasting services, such as by Radio Free Asia, and distribution of leaflets, DVDs, computer flash drives, documentaries, and movies into North Korea through both overt and covert means.** It is critical to aggressively pursue distribution methods, such as airborne leaflets, to introduce information into North Korea about the true nature of its regime in addition to "feel good" initiatives like the New York Philharmonic's visit to Pyongyang last year.

Conclusion

It has never been a question of *whether* to engage North Korea, but of *how* to do so. It is critical to understand that engagement is a means rather than an end, and it is equally important to control how engagement is applied. For the time being, the U.S. should continue diplomatic attempts to reduce the North Korean nuclear threat. The likelihood for success, though, is not high. Pyongyang's recent demands for new conditions in exchange for giving up its nuclear weapons run counter to three Six-

Party Talks agreements and threaten to derail the nuclear negotiations once again.

While the U.S. should continue to strive for a diplomatic solution to the North Korean nuclear threat, employing a combination of all instruments of national power, the Obama Administration should also accept that there simply may be no set of inducements to ensure North Korean abandonment of its nuclear weapons. There is a growing sense that Pyongyang's antics and stalling tactics are not merely negotiating ploys, but instead are designed to achieve international acceptance of North Korea as a nuclear power. North Korean officials have repeatedly indicated that is precisely their intention.

The U.S. should establish non-flexible deadlines so that Pyongyang cannot continue to drag out negotiations. In addition, it would be prudent for Washington to initiate contingency plans with

South Korea and Japan should the Six-Party Talks no longer seem to be a viable policy option.

Equally important, the Obama Administration should give new context to the nuclear issue by expanding the North Korea policy agenda. North Korea's nuclear and associated weapons programs should remain the most critical focus of U.S. policy. But the problem with North Korea is bigger than that. The United States should actively address the North Korean problem across the range of threats it poses to the international system. This way, the U.S. can confront the problem more comprehensively and fundamentally, as well as in mutually reinforcing ways. Adding lanes to the road will improve the prospects for success in every lane.

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