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NORTH KOREA

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Dr. Kim's views are his own and do not reflect the positions of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory or the Department of Energy.

Kim cautioned against over-reliance on the worst-case scenario assessments of some policymakers and specialists that North Korea's nuclear weapons program is fairly advanced, citing the absence of hard knowledge about the program to support such a claim. At the same time, it cannot be said that the program is not advancing or advanced. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has said that "the existence of nuclear weapons in North Korea is at the minimum probable" and that fuel rod reprocessing could yield the materials for further weapons construction in "a relatively short period of time"; similarly, the CIA has publicly announced that large-scale nuclear weapons production, at a rate of fifty bombs per year, could begin in North Korea as early as 2005. However, while IAEA monitoring devices have clearly been removed, it is unclear at this point whether or not North Korea is actually reprocessing the approximately eight thousand spent fuel rods from its 5MW research reactor. Similarly, despite a North Korean official's April 2003 claim to Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly that North Korea has a secret nuclear program, the facilities in question have not been located. Much remains unknown: how much, if any, plutonium North Korea has separated from the fuel rods; whether or not North Korea has an additional reprocessing plant; where, if additional uranium enrichment facilities exist, North Korea has hidden them; where North Korea has built underground bases; whether there are other facilities; and finally, whether or not North Korea has taken the spent fuel rods and, if it has, where it has taken them.

The circumstantial evidence that has emerged from defector testimony indicates that North Korea is engaged in reprocessing without concern for basic worker or environmental safety. In one account, yellow smoke emitted by the Institute 501 experimental plant typically caused the plant's workers severe pain and trouble breathing. Another defector recalled workers jumping into uranium solution in their underwear to remove a piece of cloth plugging a valve: "They were passed off as our model - that is, as paragons who sacrificed their own bodies without hesitation, all for nuclear development."

The future prospects of the North Korean nuclear program depend on the country's ability to construct functional reactors and produce fissile material as well as on its

ballistic missile capabilities. First, though various think tank assessments differ on how long it will take North Korea's reactors to become operational, there is a consensus that the completion of one 200 MW and one 700 MW thermal reactor was years away at the time of the 1994 Agreed Framework. Once operational, the two reactors could produce approximately 275 kg of plutonium per year, 55 kg from the 200 MW and 220 kg from the 700 MW reactor. As the amount of plutonium used per bomb is dependent both on North Korea's technical capabilities and on its desired yield, the 275 kg figure does not translate into an assessment of how many nuclear weapons North Korea could or would produce.

North Korea's ballistic missile program boasts a stockpile of about 600-750 missiles. However, this figure says little about North Korea's launch capability, the number of missiles it could fire in a war; launch capability is dependent on the country's launch facilities and on its manpower, among other logistical factors. Furthermore, a March 2002 accidental explosion at a North Korean launch site may have severely crippled operations, according to South Korean government sources. Defense Ministry officials have estimated that North Korea would have difficulty launching another missile for at least a year. Still, North Korea has exhibited proficiency in the design and production of effective multi-stage ballistic missiles; accuracy improvements and other steps forward are anticipated.

Given the likelihood that North Korea already has a small nuclear arsenal, its failure to test a nuclear device thus far might be attributed to one of two reasons. First, as North Korea would only test a weapon if it had enough material left over for several additional bombs, it is possible that the state simply did not want to "waste" a bomb with a test. This would, after all, be somewhat consistent with the United States decision to only test a single device before actually using atomic bombs in wartime. Alternatively, North Korea may simply have confidence in the accuracy of non-nuclear tests and calculations to verify bomb yield.

Many policymakers fear that North Korea's endemic economic crisis could prompt the Pyongyang regime to raise funds by selling special nuclear material or a completed nuclear weapon to another state or non-state actor, but Kim thought this unlikely. Admittedly, North Korea has a longstanding history of arming other nations for cash; according to US government sources, North Korea sold about \$580 million worth of ballistic missiles to Middle Eastern states in 2001 alone. However, Kim Jong-Il is not a blind risk-taker. So long as he can raise significant revenues by selling missiles, narcotics, and other more common contraband, he will have little reason to sell fissile material from his country's limited supply. Even if Kim Jong-Il did intend to put fissile material on the market, it is unlikely North Korea would actually do so before it had acquired a much larger arsenal than it probably has at the moment. However, if Kim Jong Il is able to gather a significant quantity of fissile material, then the probability of an actual sale or of North Korean threats of a sale will dramatically increase.

Kim identified the regional powers with a stake in the current stalemate as Russia, Japan, South Korea, and China, in order of increasing relevance. First, while Russia

has the least at stake in the fate of the North Korean nuclear program, President Putin has directly involved himself in the crisis, having released with Chinese President Hu Jintao a joint statement that excludes force as a solution to the problem. What's more, Kim Jong-Il's visit to Moscow may have carried favor with Putin, who announced on June 20 that "Under no circumstances should North Korea be driven into a corner...If North Korea has problems and concerns over its security...it should be given these security guarantees." But despite Russia's ability to offer oil and rail transport routes to the Kim regime, Russia has little real leverage over North Korea; Moscow's principal hope for gaining a more significant role lies in a hypothetical souring of Sino-North Korean relations, in which case Russia might assume China's role as mediator.

Japan exercised restraint in its response to North Korea's 1998 testing launch of a Taepodong ballistic missile over its territory, but the Tokyo government has taken concrete steps, including a measure to improve U.S.-Japanese military coordination, since North Korea's 2002 admission that its spies had abducted Japanese citizens decades earlier. Within Prime Minister Koizumi's cabinet, there is an apparent divide between Deputy Vice Foreign Minister Hitoshi Tanaka, who laid the groundwork for Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang and emphasizes such dialogue, and the more hawkish Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe. Abe has joined Defense Secretary Ishiba in urging Koizumi to be more coercive and on June 15 asserted that "there is no one in the world who believes you can solve gangster troubles through dialogue." Abe's argument that the time has come for Japan to rethink its fundamental values suggests a debate unprecedented in the history of the modern Japanese republic. Nationalists have profited in the political and social spheres from ongoing reports that North Korean guided missiles threaten Japan, threats that have fostered in the polity a feeling of helplessness suggestive of the drifting Taisho period of the 1920s and early 1930s

Though South Korea, as the traditional object of Pyongyang's expansionist aims, should be most concerned by North Korean nuclear proliferation, Seoul's behavior in the present crisis has been overly conciliatory. Kim Dae-Jung's Sunshine Policy has worked to undermine the mainstays of modern South Korean statecraft: anticommunism and a pro-American foreign policy. The opposition Grand National Party is badly divided; critics of North Korea are silenced; the South Korean public knows little about Kim Jong-Il and North Korea more generally; and even officials in Seoul refuse to contemplate preventive military strikes against the North. There are occasional appeals for a more hard-line policy, such as Army Chief of Staff Nam Jae-Joon's "clarifying" label of Pyongyang as Seoul's "main enemy," a term that had been removed from the Defense Ministry lexicon under the Kim Dae-Jung administration, and National Assembly Speaker Park Kwan-Yong's calls for the government not to oppose proposals of economic sanctions against the North. Nonetheless, even Park's request was followed by rebukes accusing the Roh administration of undercutting the Sunshine Policy and general pan-Korean nationalism.

In this polarized political environment, ROK President Roh has himself been inconsistent, offering a different message to the international community than he does to the Korean public. Though fairly pro-American in his spring 2003 visit to Washington,

he has since stated that he regretted his enthusiasm; in Japan, Roh passed over the United States to praise Japan as South Korea's best friend and touted dialogue as the only acceptable means of resolving the standoff with North Korea; in China, he praised Mao Zedong as one of his political heroes; finally, Roh has claimed that to become a full democracy, South Korea will have to repeal its domestic ban on the Communist Party. By compromising South Korea's pro-American and anti-communist foreign policy mantle in this way, Seoul risks being excluded from the diplomatic wrangling that surrounds the North Korean nuclear crisis; what's more, by looking the other way and, at times, assenting to anti-American and pro-North Korean sentiments at home, Roh's government is constraining US policy options, thereby obstructing the resolution of the standoff.

Finally, China, whose oil and coal exports account for 80 percent of North Korean energy production, is the most important of the regional powers with a stake in the North Korean crisis. Beijing has emphasized the importance of dialogue in resolving the standoff but remains deeply concerned both by the North Korean nuclear program and ostensibly by the threats posed by refugees from North Korea to the stability of its own Communist political system. Also, unlike Seoul, Beijing sees relations with the United States as a paramount consideration in decision-making about the crisis. Nonetheless, the official position of the Chinese government seems to differ from the views of the Chinese public; a recent survey of Chinese opinion revealed that 57 percent want their government to back North Korea in the event of another Korean War, 89 percent oppose the United States' military threats to Pyongyang and U.S. policies toward North Korea more generally, and 54 percent characterized Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions as an internal matter than should be resolved domestically.

Despite such pro-Pyongyang dynamics in the general Chinese public, Beijing is unlikely to oppose economic sanctions if Washington moves forcefully to impose them. Indeed, Jiang Zemin did not oppose sanctions in 1994, and though he has since ceded the title of president to Hu Jintao, Jiang retains broad power and influence over Chinese military decisions and government policy in general. The "Shanghai Bang," or Shanghai faction, which Jiang controls, maintains a numerical majority in key government bodies. Five of the nine members of the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo, including Jiang protégé Zeng Qinghong, are members of the Shanghai Bang. Jiang and two other Shanghai members outnumber Hu on the four-member Central Military Commission, of which Jiang remains president. Finally, though Hu heads the North Korean Crisis Leading Group, it was Jiang who ordered the group's March 2003 formation; Vice President Zeng Qinghong, a Jiang confidant who has good personal relations with the North Korean leadership, is the group's deputy chief. All in all, Jiang has positioned himself to maintain effective control in much the same way Deng Xiaoping did after formally ceding the reins to Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang; the foreign policy paradigms that developed under Jiang's leadership will probably continue under Hu Jintao.

Kim articulated a broad range of U.S. options for addressing the North Korean nuclear crisis. First, the United States might simply acquiesce, but this option is bound up in the

question of whether or not the US could live with a nuclear North Korea. Second, Washington might seek a temporary freeze on the North Korean nuclear program, as it did with some success in the 1994 Agreed Framework. Third, the Bush administration might pursue a sanctions regime. Here, the policymakers would have to decide whether the sanctions would simply block exports of missiles, drugs, and counterfeit currency or whether imports would also be interdicted; they would also have to decide whether it would be feasible to undertake a selective blockade unilaterally or whether it would be more advisable to enlist help from Seoul and Tokyo; finally, they would have to evaluate whether a blockade could even be successful - that is, whether U.S. forces could accurately detect the export of fissile materials or components. Fourth, the United States might conduct a preventive strike on North Korean nuclear facilities; here, the element of surprise might be hindered by the stated positions of Seoul and Tokyo, as simply sidestepping South Korea might unacceptably jeopardize the fifty-year-old US-ROK alliance.

In terms of short-term, less comprehensive options, Kim suggested psychological operations that would address some stability concerns by communicating to North Korean officials and to various embassies that any collapse of the Kim Jong-Il regime need not bring down the North Korean state with it. U.S. policymakers might also gain rhetorical ground by stressing North Korea's terrible human rights record, financing lecture tours by prominent North Korean defectors. Finally, the United States might highlight the DPRK's inability to feed its own people even as it pursues an expensive nuclear weapons program. To this end, humanitarian aid might be delivered not at Pyongyang, but at Panmunjom, where North Korea would have to visibly retrieve it; if Pyongyang refused, it would exhibit the callous intransigence of Kim Jong-Il's government.