

North Korea: Through the Looking Glass

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Precis

A key to management of the current confrontation over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) nuclear program and long range missile developments is to dispassionately assess DPRK:

- perception of the military threat from the Republic of Korea (ROK) and U.S.,
- warfighting doctrine, strategies, and deployments, and
- military intentions.

Three cardinal rules apply here and to any military perspective. First, never say never with regard to intentions and capabilities. Second, always expect the unexpected. Third, you must go through the looking glass to try to see things as the other side is likely to view them.

This perspective goes through the looking glass to reflect issues as the DPRK seems likely to interpret them, to make sense of some of their actions, and to unravel some of the controversy. Definitive information on their intent is hard to come by, however, and provocative DPRK actions encourage misinterpretation, misrepresentation, and hot debate. The views are those of a retired intelligence officer with substantial experience on the DPRK, China, and Soviet militaries—and a North Korea watcher for 35 years.

The genesis of this assessment began in the seventies. What is presented is consistent with what is known of the DPRK doctrine and forces from intelligence sources and other reporting. Soviet and Chinese warfighting concepts as modified for use by the North Korean Army (NKA) reinforce this perspective. Finally, we look at North Korean responses and actions in earlier crises, and based on their responses to earlier crises, we consider some potential DPRK reactions to strategies to rid them of nuclear and long-range missile capabilities.

The Bottom Line

The findings are a mix of generally agreed points as well as more controversial concepts. As a body they should be a part of the calculus in establishing negotiation strategies and tactics.

This perspective contends:

- The DPRK truly believes in, and operates from, a worst case ROK/US threat that includes forces on the peninsula and a healthy slice of US Pacific Command (PACCOM) forces as well as some US-based ground and air forces.
- The North's leadership is a captive of its worst case scenario and largely reacts to it. This, in turn, affects US/ROK responses and continues the circle of crises.
- DPRK leaders operate from a warped geocentric/egocentric view of the world and their position in it. Their tough guy bravado that alternates "peace offenses" and inflexible brinkmanship tactics is meant to maximize deterrence and provide room for political maneuver.
- They believe themselves clever strategists able to repeatedly flummox an inconsistent and sometimes naïve "enemy" to take the political high ground and secure materiel support for little more than fingers-crossed responses. They flex and flinch only when they perceive some measure of success or when they face immediate and harsh consequences.
- The DPRK overdependence on "juche"—self-reliance—reflects a sense of abandonment by China and Russia. *Juche* pushes the North in the direction of overproduction and deployment of select arms to make up for their perceived asymmetric military deficiencies.
- The DPRK military force (army, air, navy, and air defense) is principally configured for defense in depth in its deployment, training, and support. The concentration of long range artillery opposite Seoul is as much or more valuable in deterrence, defense, and retribution than in offense action.

- North Korean contingency offensive plans reflect an understanding that its offensive options and capabilities are limited and that only US withdrawal and revolutionary chaos in the ROK would provide any real chance for success.
- The DPRK leadership believes nuclear capabilities and long range missiles are the ultimate deterrent, a lever for political respect and military equivalency, a guarantee of regime survival, a way to get much needed hard currency, and a way to blackmail the enemy for aid and assistance.
- At the end of the day survival of the DPRK regime is the leadership's foremost objective. Even in the face of a blockade or a surgical strike against nuclear facilities, a full-scale overt attack against the ROK seems less than 50/50.
- They are devious enough, however, to attempt a covert WMD attack against US or allied facilities in response to a surgical strike or blockade through use of surrogate cut outs or false-flagged capabilities.
- And finally, as it has been for 50 years, the highest potential for war in Korea remains by accident or by rogue action from either side of the DMZ.

A Baseline Understanding

A pop psychologist looking at North Korea might well conclude the patient is sane, calculating, and devious, capable of rational action within its own experience, exceedingly manipulative of its environment, and has a strong sense of self-survival. The subject suffers, however, from narcissist personality disorder, paranoia, delusions of grandeur, a sense of abandonment, and has schizoid tendencies and bipolar disorder.

The North Korean senior leadership and cadres are rational, actors within their own narrow experience and needs—and to an extent predictable. They are educated, technically competent, and politically savvy elitists who survive and thrive in an oppressive and suspicious society alien to our understanding. Moreover, there is perverse logic to the North's perception of

a threat, how they operate their forces, and how they play the international scene. It becomes more apparent once you get past the alien context that dominates their thoughts, and bypass our own worst case assessments and unhelpful mirror imaging.

It is noteworthy that for all the confrontations and crises surrounding the Korean peninsula over the last half century, none has resulted in open combat. In each case the threat of warfare drove all sides to find acceptable resolutions or at least bearable terms to defuse internal and cross border confrontations. This repetitious pattern reinforces DPRK perceptions of itself and the ROK/US alliance. The huge military forces that face each other daily across the DMZ provide for an eerie, tense stalemate that deters each side. Although both sides seek an advantage, neither seems prepared to risk the costs of war.

For more than half a century the DPRK leadership, now in its second generation, has yearned and plotted to reunite the Korean peninsula under its control. It has alternated frenzies of extreme actions and “peace offenses” (possibly six) to foment revolution in the ROK and create the circumstances favorable to that end. At the same time it recognizes and fears what they see as an overwhelming threat from its ROK rivals and their “imperialist” US ally, aided and abetted by the historic nemesis of Japan.

Over the years the DPRK’s hope of forcing reunion on their terms seems less achievable to them in the near term because of their own severe internally driven limitations, the loss of backers, and the immense growth of the ROK still backed by US forces. The North reacts like a bully who employs bravado, taunts, and pushes to intimidate his rivals and grab a free lunch. Yet the bully fears losing. He hopes the fight will never come and that his fears will go unrecognized and unchallenged and his intimidation will carry the day.

North Korea, nonetheless, remains a formidable and dangerous military opponent, duplicitous in nature and not wholly predictable. Although war is not inevitable, the North’s latest gambit to produce long range missiles and a nuclear capability dangerously alters the balance and destabilizes northeast Asia. It cracks the door to restart dormant ROK and

Taiwanese nuclear weapons programs and raises the possibility of a Japanese *force de frappe*. DPRK sales of missiles, proliferation of nuclear technology, and conceivably on down the road the sale of nuclear materials is the world's nightmare proliferation scenario. Confirmed interactions with Pakistan, Iran, Libya, Yemen and others are clear warning that the DPRK's program must be halted and dismantled. The questions are how soon, by what measures, and at what costs.

Going Through the Looking Glass

The North Korean Army (NKA)—an all-services force—was from day one tutored and equipped by the Soviets and the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). They shared baseline military doctrine, strategies, tactics, and operational organizations and concepts. DPRK commanders grew up under that system and adopted its tenets, but modified some aspects for use in the Korean theater (again *juche*). It is what they know and understand, and it fits well with their circumstances.

DPRK use of a modified Soviet/PLA warfighting model is evident from intelligence reporting and reconnaissance. The history goes back more than 50 years. NKA officers learned organization, doctrine, and tactics at Frunze and in China. It is apparent in their tactics and deployments but the NKA has modified them to fit DPRK needs and circumstances. DPRK force organizations, deployments, training and exercises, and service support all fit the baseline patterns of their mentors. Moreover, insights provided by the limited pool of defectors, as well as other sources, indicate direct lifts for operational planning. Unfortunately, our own sometimes overwrought and worst case assumptions, misinterpretation of DPRK doctrine and political strategies, mirror-imaging, and a failure to mapover and apply Soviet/Chinese operational concepts to Korea at times interferes with building a reasoned and balanced assessment.

The Soviet/PLA model extends to much of the DPRK's military equipment which further dictates their war-fighting capabilities. The Soviets and the Chinese kept the North Koreans on a

short leash in terms of quantities and modernity of equipment and its capabilities. NKA air, air defense, and naval capabilities are in the Soviet/PLA image—largely for air defense and coastal defense. The DPRK focused on production of its own artillery, armor, and missiles (*juche*) as Soviet and Chinese armaments became less available. Artillery and armor remain the bases of firepower with missiles adding firepower and range. It is the same asymmetry of forces seen in the Cold War, US/NATO aircraft versus the Soviet preponderance of artillery tubes and armor. (See equipment summary on page _____.)

North Korean military commanders are like military planners everywhere. They start with their vision of a likely worst case threat and arm and deploy their own force to defeat the enemy through defenses, firepower, maneuver, and the warfighting capabilities of motivated troops. The responsible DPRK planner compiles enemy order of battle (OB), tables of equipment (TOE) for enemy active duty ground, air, and naval units on or near the peninsula. He adds to that reserve forces and likely off-peninsula reinforcements based on past history and exercises. The North Korean planner would assume enemy reinforcement plans would be well underway from the outset of a crisis to maximize the rapid buildup of force capabilities.

Most military planners will look at recent enemy combat experience to assess what new weapons or forces might be committed and add a little something for the unexpected. Once the threat is sized the planner addresses his own force requirements and capabilities based on roughly parallel combat force slices. When faced by asymmetric threats and superior forces, the competent planner finds offsets to even up the odds, takes advantage of his own strengths, employs deception to confuse and deter the enemy, and seeks military equivalency or at least a deterrent with more weapons or better new weapons.

The ROK/US Threat: A View from Paektusan

ROK/US order of battle (OB) and tables of organization and equipment (TO&E) and deployments for active and reserve units on the peninsula are the tip of the proverbial iceberg

from the view of the DPRK. ROK/US flying “artillery” offsets NKA advantages in tube artillery that is less mobile, limited in range, and more limited in throw weight and accuracy. Qualitative and quantitative asymmetric US/ROK advantages are not readily apparent until ordnance quality and loads are considered.

Team Spirit exercises, reinforcements in past crises, and simple logic provide a North Korean planner’s reasonable estimate for what a US reinforcement slice would look like. Some of the air and naval reinforcements would arrive in hours or days. More of the in-area forces including some ground units would arrive in the first two weeks and follow on forces over the next two months. First arrivals would be from US assets home-based in Japan or at sea in the eastern Pacific.

US/ROK air superiority is established immediately with the arrival of:

- Two or three aircraft carriers off the North Korean coasts. This adds 100 to 150 combat aircraft, all far more capable than the DPRK’s dated and ill-trained air force.
- Two more air force fighter/attack wings from Japan and Marine squadrons add even more modern aircraft.
- US naval forces in carrier battle groups and independent assets like submarines would total some 40-60 ships, many armed with sophisticated munitions, including Tomahawk cruise missiles, JDAMs, etc.
- B-2, B-1, and B-52 bomber deployments from stateside US bases would arrive in theater early on. While the numbers would vary, the augmentation might include two wing equivalents.

These forces provide an asymmetric advantage in terms of aircraft quality, ordnance accuracy, firepower mobility, and sheer tonnage on target that is an overwhelming firepower advantage over NKA assets.

On the ground the US 3rd Marine Division based on Okinawa is the first major ground combat unit to transit into the Korean Theater of Operations (KTO). Special Forces units would

soon follow along with the 1st Marine Division and the Army 25th Division (Hawaii) and the 10th Mountain Division or another division from the continental US. These and other airborne or air mobile units could add another 60,000 to 80,000 or more men plus their equipment.

Little wonder the North's tally would show a huge firepower advantage for the ROK/US combined forces. Additionally, from the DPRK perspective, US offensive intent and capability is demonstrated by actions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti and elsewhere. From their perspective Korea, Vietnam, and even World War II are all proof positive of the intent of the "diabolical imperialists."

Finally, North Korean commanders clearly understand that long-established US doctrine provides for first use of nuclear weapons at the moment of US choosing. And, they recognize that the US used nuclear weapons in Asia at the end of WWII and has threatened to use them against the DPRK.

DPRK Force Structure and Potential for Defense and Offense

With a DPRK perspective of the reinforced ROK/US capabilities in mind—even if we might find it overstated—it is time to look at the DPRK warfighting doctrine, assets, deployments and defensive and offensive potential in relation to the threat. DPRK current holdings and deployments are laid out in the following maps and tables.

All too few political/military analysts—let alone lay persons—understand that in Soviet/PLA/NKA doctrine that:

- Defense is a critical first priority and one that is reflected in deployments and equipment (air, air defense, naval, and ground elements). Multiple lines of defenses, defensive positions, and protected storage areas (underground facilities) abound.
- NKA forces are arrayed in depth across the front and coasts to absorb and defeat an enemy attack. (Armor and mechanized elements are in reserve to counter an enemy breakthrough.)

- Service support at corps and above is based on the civil economy and homeland reserve. It is mobilized at the last possible moment to avoid disruption of the economy (an Indications and Warning (I&W) indicator).

In offensive operations, the following actions occur:

- Defensive barriers and minefields must be cleared (I&W indicator)—in the case of the North several tiers of defense are involved.
- Service support at Corps and above once mobilized would move additional units of fire, fuel (POL), and general supplies forward (I&W indicator).
- Substantial redeployments of infantry and massing of artillery opposite narrow breakthrough zones (sometimes along Corps boundaries) are necessary to achieve firepower and forces' advantages on the axes of advance (I&W indicator). Only after infantry and artillery breakthrough operations begin would the motorized and armor concentrations deploy forward to exploit the gaps.
- Rapid advances are predicated on breakthroughs and on bypassing urban areas to get to pre-determined objectives and phase lines where an operational pause allows for resupply and replacements.
- Urban areas are left to collapse under the pressures of artillery fires, depletion of supplies, and the arrival of a second echelon infantry or replaced first echelon units.

Actions for cover concealment and deception (CCD) are one measure the North Korean planner uses to optimize his warfighting potential. The actions are meant to provide protection and potentially the illusion of greater strength than the reality. The longstanding North Korean effort extends to ground, air and naval facilities where mountains are extensively excavated to provide for shelter and concealment of armor, artillery, aircraft, and ships. On the accountability side standard deception plans often include such measures as puffery, including reporting of false units or cadre manned mobilization base units which the enemy assumes are at TO&E strength and manning.

Similarly, on the equipment side, the enemy is unable to accurately count armor, artillery, and aircraft because of storage/deployment in underground facilities. Again, it is likely that the enemy will assume full unit compliments of modern armaments. This, coupled with the historic DPRK deployment of derelict and dead-end equipment good only in defense, will likely further inflate enemy estimates. Historically, and even today, the large number of underground facilities provide significant protection from enemy attacks, but today there is a downside. Enemy guided and penetrator weapons may make many of these facilities tombs rather than provide protection.

For deception to be effective it must be accompanied by effective forces training activity matched by appreciable expenditures of ordnance and POL and a logistics capability commensurate with the force. Moreover, the enemy must accept his own worst case assumptions without a thoroughgoing assessment because of the deception efforts. For example, with a large artillery and mechanized force come requirements to train and maneuver large units and resupply the mega consumers of ammunition and POL in combat where consumption runs wild. The more mechanized/motorized the force the higher the requirements for pre-D-day stockpiles and the greater the logistics load on organic and mobilized carriers operating under fire along limited lines of communication (LOCs). The Northern planner hopes the enemy overestimates DPRK forces, capabilities, and training and ignores inconsistencies because of assumptions that much training went unmonitored.

Logistics and resupply are every North Korean commander's nightmare on defense and offense. Requirements difficult to maintain in defense become extreme in offensive action. Further, the more mechanized the force and the greater the number of artillery and armor tubes the greater the exponential increase in the logistics load. The longer the LOCs and their limits in numbers and capacity, the more difficult it becomes to keep the lines filled with supplies. This is a crucial problem at the national level where the logistics wherewithal (trucks and trains) must be mobilized from civil holdings.

On the other hand, in defense the planners' logistics requirements are substantially

reduced because expenditures are lessened, stocks are nearer the user, and a lesser compliment of rail and road transporters are needed in support. (Note: In the end you can not have it both ways. You must train as you intend to fight and have the wherewithal for logistics transport. If stocks are limited along with the means of supply forward—truck and rail capacities—it dictates a principal intent for defense or intent to use WMD in offense. Gross assumptions that vast POL stocks are available underground run counter to the evidence as does the lack of a well-trained, high capacity logistics tail. Alternative assumptions require a Chinese/Russian conspiracy to provide for high volumes of POL and the means to move it.)

The limits of North Korean air force (NKAF) capabilities also are worrisome for the DPRK planner. The NKAF is a marginal combat force. Its inventory is dominated by air defense aircraft, and ground attack capabilities are severely limited. The aircraft are constrained by age, modernity, low ordnance capacity, and heavy maintenance requirements. Pilots likely get about 40 air hours of training annually for reasons of POL availability, high maintenance requirements, and area flight constraints. This compares to 240 hours for US/ROK pilots. The training hours are unlikely to have changed much over the last 25 years. Forty air hours dominated by take off and landings (TOLs), simple box patterns, and strafing runs may be enough to maintain basic flight proficiency but not to prepare for high intensity combat capabilities. The planners can only hope that after 10 days or so of combat that those pilots and aircraft that survive more evenly match their counterparts. He hopes also the enemy has not spent the collection and analysis efforts necessary to assess pilot proficiency and training. In the end with a few nuclear devices he can hope to hold cities and facilities in the ROK and US naval deployments at risk and potentially be able to slip some aircraft southward or seaward to hit a high value target.

The North Korean navy (NKN) too is largely a coastal defense force with a far more limited offensive potential. Similar to its air force counterpart, their principal role is to extend defenses seaward to provide a hostile environment for US navy/amphibious elements. The NKN planner would commit his anti-ship missilery (ground and sea-based) and the dated submarine

force to take a toll on US ships and force aircraft carriers and amphibious forces to stay well away from shore. The great hope would be to cripple or sink a US carrier or other ships of the line. While the missile boats and submarines are not highly capable or modern craft, they can also project southward to interdict enemy naval forces and protect NKA light forces headed for insertion into enemy rear areas. The emphasis, however, must be on the defensive mission because the critical nature of the seaward US threat.

Defense Potential

The DPRK general staff assessment of geo-topographic and capabilities circumstances almost certainly must conclude that they are best prepared for defense. They also understand that their chances for significant success in offense are far less likely to nil against a prepared, capable, and nuclear-armed adversary. A few nuclear weapons in the hands of the DPRK, however, would hold enemy forces and facilities at risk which changes the strategic balance and evens the odds to an extent.

In defense the DPRK commander operates over terrain he and his forces know well. His positions are heavily fortified, forces are optimally deployed, fields of fire are clear and target areas are pre-registered. Moreover, supplies are near at hand, logistics lines are shortened, and finally, reinforcement plans are in place. The addition of a small nuclear capability would vastly complicate enemy mission planning, and hopefully limit a conflict to conventional means.

The geography and topography of the North provide strong defensive potential along most of the DMZ and the east coast. The broader coastal plain and the Pyongyang capital region in the west are less defense friendly. Additionally, the extensive coastlines on each coast complicate planning although the Chinese presence on the western flank would constrain an attacking ROK/US force. (See map on page ____.) The rugged Tae Bak mountains that dominate the area are both friend and foe. The good news is that the mountains provide for excellent in-depth defensive terrain. The downside is that the lines of communication (LOCs) north/south

and east/west are few and narrow. This tends to isolate each region and makes force movements and supply difficult and increases vulnerability—particularly for rail, towed, mechanized, and armor equipment.

North Korean army deployments along the DMZ, coasts, and interior are classically defensive in their posture. Along the DMZ the DPRK has as many as six layers of prepared defensive barriers (mines, ditches, dug in positions, underground facilities, etc.). These provide significant barriers in defense but would require considerable clearing, filling, and breaching operations to transition to offensive combat. (Such operations along with necessary force redeployments would be key I&W indicators of offensive intent.) Infantry forces are forward deployed along with concentrations of artillery across the vulnerable approaches. Armor and mechanized units—many stashed in excavated mountain facilities—are positioned behind to meet and destroy enemy thrusts. Second echelon and light forces guard the far reaches of the coast and the interior.

Infantry divisions are spread across the DMZ in fronts that correspond to the vulnerability on logical axes of enemy attack. Army/corps nominally keep two or more divisions on line with others in reserve. The more mobile mechanized and armor components back them up. All of adjacent units have overlapping fields of fire and are supported by army/corps artillery on the avenues of approach. The greater density of mechanized forces on the western coastal plain anticipates the vulnerability of the Pyongyang Region to ground and amphibious operations by enemy forces. The vaunted NKA special/light forces have an offensive and defensive mission of infiltrating behind enemy lines to harass, interdict, and disorganize the enemy. This is a Korean modification to be sure, but one that mimics Chinese regional/militia forces responsibilities for “peoples’ war” as an integrated element of conventional war.

Massed artillery located in protected positions opposite Seoul is as valuable in defense as it is in offense. It holds Seoul at risk and covers the front of the US 2ID which is on the approach to the North Korean west coast plain on the way to Pyongyang.

Offensive Potential

In offense the DPRK general staff commander faces severe obstacles, extreme uncertainties, and he has little or no real experience moving offensively against a prepared and technologically superior force. His best chance for a significant southward advance depends on extreme political/social upheaval in the ROK; a demoralized and unprepared ROK military; and flawless execution of a high-risk plan. Again the availability of even a few nuclear devices would help neutralize and deter the US nuclear threat against the North which would at least keep combat limited to conventional arms.

Historically the North has tried to instigate revolution in the South to create the conditions necessary for success of their rather fanciful offensive. The Blue House raid and the Ulchin operation in the sixties are examples as are other efforts. Reconnaissance by small and medium-sized groups today continue to probe likely areas for sea or air insertions of light forces. Under the DMZ tunnels are yet another example for light forces insertion preparations. Additionally, sleeper agents with fifth column responsibilities could be introduced via agent boats.

Nevertheless, time and again the North has failed to start an insurrection or has failed to take advantage of the very circumstances they describe as the highest potential for offensive success against the ROK. One prime example was in the 1979-1980 timeframe when they seemed unprepared to exploit the disruption caused by the Pak assassination, Taegu Seven Star coup, huge demonstrations in Seoul, and the revolt in the Kwangju area. The declaration of DEFCON II sent them scrambling for their defensive positions and unprepared for offensive action. This, and similar other reactions to events, suggests they remain principally defensively oriented.

An offensive against an able ROK/US reinforced military would no doubt inflict severe damage and casualties in the ROK but also devastate the North and its forces. NKA forces would move against heavily armed and dug in forces fronted by prepared kill zones designed to

concentrate NKA units and leave them vulnerable to air and artillery attack. The terrain is unfamiliar with narrow avenues of approach and attack in mountainous and desiccated areas that again would canalize NKA forces and limit NKA firepower forward *vis a vis* the defenders. ROK/US air operations into the depths of the DPRK would damage or destroy facilities, command and control nodes, and transportation and logistics capabilities.

The further southward an NKA advance the more critical are NKA logistics requirements for resupply, POL, and air defense cover. The planner understands, also, the longer the logistics lines, the slower the arrival of supply and the more vulnerable his forces and supply trains to counterattack. He understands that expenditures of ammunition and POL will go off the chart. History and experience tell him he will not sustain any attack much beyond a week before supplies run low and he must make a tactical halt for resupply—if he is able.

Worst of all, the DPRK commander would understand his forces are stretched too thin. He would have sustained high casualties in first echelon units. Less capable second echelon forces are likely to be under attack and slow to provide relief. Moreover, his flanks on the axes of advance in the homeland will be vulnerable to enemy counterattack and cutoff by conventional forces or nuclear means. Surely, not a confidence builder for offensive combat.

The DPK general offensive scenario acknowledges the limitations of its forces against a combined ROK/US that with reinforcement overmatches DPRK firepower. What defector and supporting intelligence sources describe is a Koreanized Soviet style operation that makes great sense from the perspective of the DPRK but depends on utter confusion in the ROK civil population, poor combat discipline on the part of the ROK/US forces, and a rising fifth column in support of the inserted DPRK light forces.

Standard Soviet offensive planning—and parallel DPRK plans—describe breakthrough zones where massed fires and infantry forces provide at least a 3:1 and preferably a 6:1 firepower advantage across a narrow enemy front at or near division boundaries. After the artillery barrage, infantry forces breach the enemy defenses and develop a gap through which armored/motorized

/mechanized forces exploit to move deep into the enemy rear. A cardinal rule of this concept is to avoid urban areas and urban combat which will slow advance and suck up manpower, ammunition, POL, and general supply. (Very much the opposite of forces that strike out for capitals.) The by-passed cities/urban areas are left to be reduced by artillery fires and second echelon forces closing from the rear.

Applied to the Korean Theater of Operations (KTO), the DPRK presupposes breakthroughs away from the environs of Seoul. Operands along the coasts, Chorwon corridor, etc. and rapid advances to a combat pause/consolidation phase line south of Osan/Suwan/Wonsu (80-100 kilometers in Soviet doctrine) stretching across the peninsula seem most likely. Meanwhile additional light/special forces infiltrate south of the phase line to soften up the area for a second advance after forces are resupplied/replaced. Throughout the initial advance artillery opposite Seoul continues to reduce resistance in that area.

The Korean addition to this general scenario emphasizes the use of sizeable light/special forces airdropped/prelanded/inserted by sea or traversing gaps to massively disrupt enemy rear areas, bases, and redeployments. Their success in the disruption mission is fundamental to the success of the offensive operation. Failure to achieve surprise, extremely high losses among inserted units, or failure to insert enough forces to interdict air bases, etc. could spell disaster for the NKA main force.

A nuclear-armed DPRK alters the strategic balance in this scenario because the US can no longer unilaterally employ tactical nuclear weapons against the DPRK forces or civil centers without anticipating a response. Moreover, US seaward forces and even forces based in or staging from Japan are held at risk. The fear of nuclear conflict in the ROK and Japan would likely keep the conflict conventional giving the DPRK leverage and more chance for success.

Defusing the Military/Proliferation Crisis

Even today the DPRK is most likely to back away from conflict under almost any circumstance while trying to extract the highest price possible for their limited cooperation. Time

and again over the last 50 years they have retreated and assumed a defensive posture when faced with an imminent counter threat or pre-emptive rise in the DEFCON—particularly if they can get some satisfaction from their perspective. It is an odd but consistent pattern often obscured by the bluff and bravado of self-aggrandizing noisy propaganda, aggressive actions, high profile threats, peace offenses, and hardball no fallback negotiation strategies.

Bold actions with well-defined specific requirements are necessary to resolve the current confrontation. We can ill afford another hurriedly negotiated "Framework Agreement" with critical gaps and minimal inspection protocols that only pushes the problem down the road. The focus and potential mix of diplomatic, economic, and military actions is broad. Most efforts will stress nonmilitary measures, but the military component must remain on the table to encourage DPRK flexibility. The emphasis here is on possible military actions to support the diplomatic efforts and a build-down approach—drawn from strict INF/START monitoring and extensive onsite inspections (OSI). An agreement could incorporate political and economic inducements that provide some measure of satisfaction to make the end more palatable to the DPRK.

Given the pattern of DPRK negotiations tactics, there almost certainly will come a critical point when the U.S. and its allies—no matter how grudgingly—must accede to North Korean demands or risk conflict to coerce DPRK acceptance of an end to their nuclear and extended range missile programs. When that moment comes depends on political events (i.e., US elections, ROK elections, Japanese/Chinese/ROK concerns about the nature of conflict, etc.), the level of aggressive intransigence of the North, and a US assessment of a nuclear- or missile-related circumstance that destabilizes the balance in Asia.

Any crisis will likely build quickly. US military responses and the clear willingness to use the military option as a last resort must be direct, palpable, and unmistakable to the DPRK.

Measures could include:

- a rise in the theater DEFCON
- aggressive/intrusive air/sea reconnaissance

- transit of carrier task forces to the Sea of Japan
- threats of surgical strike or even a strike itself
- re-enforcement exercises *ala* “Team Spirit”
- shipping embargoes and searches
- a more stringent sea/air blockade

Any of these the North would read as preparations for full combat. The history of crises in the Korean arena over the last half century suggests that it is at that time the DPRK most likely would concede ground in negotiations while bellowing at its neighbors, the US, and the UN.

On the political/military front a tightly written, halt in place, parallel reciprocal actions agreement—*ala* INF/START/CFCE protocols—could be an immediate goal. Specific step-by-step reciprocal actions accompanied by broad/unrestricted, no-notice, on site inspections (OSI) across the peninsula would be monitored/verified by the parties themselves or their representatives (i.e., China, Russia, Japan, UN, etc.). If either side reneges or cheats, all bets are off. At worst we return to the status quo ante with a clear understanding that pre-emptive strikes may be necessary. Not a perfect answer to be sure, but far better than nothing or another Framework Agreement with obvious loopholes and weak inspection protocols.

Moreover, it is time for the ROK to step up and take on more of its own defenses without the US 2ID acting as Dumbo’s feather. As part of any agreement, and as currently proposed sans agreement, US 2ID should redeploy to the Taegu region and the US command should relocate from the Yongsan compound. The ROK/US can insist on a significant reciprocal confidence-building measures at no cost to the ROK/US beyond what is already agreed by them. Each side gains face and the North gets something to crow about.

Builddown actions by the ROK/US side and the DPRK should have rough equivalence in scope but not necessarily by type. For example:

In return for agreement for US withdrawal from Osan AFB to Taegu-Kwangju, the North would give up its Taepo Dong or other missile or nuclear program. Although the US/ROK

sacrifices some immediate combat capability, it gains in a roughly critical arena of concern. Even redeployment of the USAF to another Asian regional base off the peninsula has upsides in terms of security, flexibility, and in projection. Further, swift return to the peninsula is possible. The North's reciprocal actions to such a major change must be truly significant in the WMD/nuclear/missile arena.

While some may argue similar benefits could accrue in security, flexibility and transition from the withdrawal of 2ID from Korea, the risks would be higher. Return to the peninsula would be slower and more problematic. If such action were considered, full capitulation on nuclear/missile/WMD programs and a major reduction and demobilization of NKA mechanized/armored elements could be demanded/required. (Recently the U.S. began a unilateral action to permanently draw down a brigade. The DPRK has not reacted or reciprocated.)

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Tabular data and maps are drawn from CNN, Global Crossing, and Mappoint.